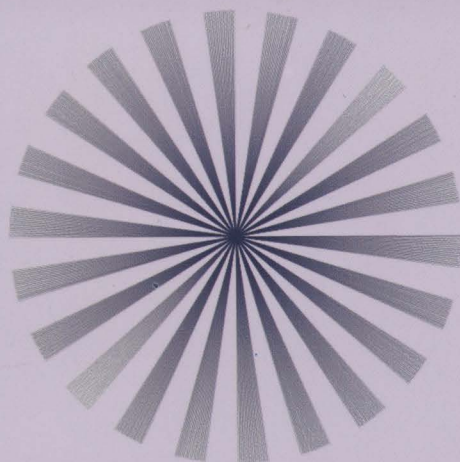


ANNALS
OF THE
SERGIU AL-GEORGE
INSTITUTE



Volumes XII-XVI 2003-2007

ANNALS OF THE SERGIU AL-GEORGE INSTITUTE
Volumes XII-XVI
2003-2007

Published by

THE SERGIU AL-GEORGE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

4 Sos. Mihai Bravu, 021325 Bucharest 2, Romania
P.O. Box: 10-49
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From Nwn to Ma'at and Back

The “Butterfly Effect” and the Egyptian Pattern of Perfection

Renata Tatomir

1. Nun and Chaos

According to the Egyptian myths of creation, the created things did not come into being from nothingness, through the action of a timeless god. The texts describe an initial chaos, “un monde antérieur”¹ that already contained in itself, in a latent state, the “raw material” necessary for the creation process. This is why, before his coming into being and starting to work, this “chaos” (Nun) had to be aware of oneself.

The Egyptians have often referred to this chaotic world, describing it as the absence of balance, or the opposite of the forming parts and balance of the created one. Sauneron and Yoyotte remark that “le “chaos” (...) est, en quelque sorte, le “négatif” du présent.”² Knowing these facts one may label this primordial state as a particular state of Universe with distinct features.

As all Egyptian cosmological texts have tried to point out, there is but one describable element of this world of chaos: an absolute and amorphous surface of water – or better say ‘liquid’ – containing in itself the germs of creation, Nun. The creation therefore has not simply emerged from nothingness, because, as far as it is concerned, the water was already there, prior to the appearance of another creator. A large mass of water, higher than the sky and deeper than the Netherworld³ is the image conveyed. This virtual realm of the non-being is beyond the subtle, invisible strata of creation, beyond the sky and underneath the Netherworld.

The personalized aspect of this non-being state was the god Nun. The Egyptian myths of creation pointed out that once the creation of the universe had taken place, Nun continued to exist beyond its boundaries, within the waters of the earth and those of the river Nile. The name of the god was written with the hieroglyphic sign for water  and he was represented by the purifying lakes which belonged to every temple. He also played a part in the rituals for laying out the foundation of a new temple structure.

¹ Sauneron & Yoyotte, 1959: p.22

² Ibidem

³ Although a part of the Universe, but neither the primeval chaos, Nun, nor the sky (in its heavenly aspect), Duat or the Netherworld is inaccessible to the living and outside normal human experience. It is separate from the sky and reached prior to it. It is called “the Field of Reeds” (*sxt iArw*) and is the realm of the deceased, and the mystery of Osiris. After death, through the agency of rituals and offerings accomplished during his life, the king, reaches the chance to the gate of the horizon waiting for emerge from the Duat and start his spiritualization. (Hornung, 1997)

One Egyptian theory says that it was from Nun that the supreme Sun-god Ra has created himself, rising up on the first piece of land - the primeval mound (Benben) out of the lotus blossom, born from the world egg, or as a *bnw-bird*⁴, who then found and landed on the mound.

Another Egyptian theory developed at Hermopolis says that before the world was formed, there was a liquid mass of dark, directionless chaos. It is in this chaos that lived the Ogdoad of Khmw-nw (Hermopolis), i.e., the four frog gods and the four snake goddesses of chaos. These deities were Nun and Naunet (liquid/water), Amun and Amaunet (invisibility), Heh and Hauhet (infinity) and Kek and Kauket (darkness). The name of the so-called “water of chaos” was Nun.

The First Time, or *zep-tepy* then began and Ra was thought to have created the Universe, including his children – others than the gods. He brought Maat, i.e., the Order/the Law of the Universe to chaos. Nun was thought to be the father of Ra, who was known as the father of gods.

Although Nun was a being of chaos, the god was thought to have a beneficial side rather than the serpent of chaos, Apep, Ra's enemy. The Egyptians believed that Apep had been created when the goddess Neith spat into Nun – her spittle turned into the serpent-daemon.

The god of chaos didn't have a priesthood, nor any temples that have been found, and he was never worshiped as a personified god. Instead, he was represented in various temples by the sacred lakes (i.e., still waters, the symbol of inertia), symbolizing the chaotic waters extant before the First time.

The priests of Waset (Thebes), on the other hand, declared that Waset was the site of the water of Nun, and of the rising of the primeval mound. Amun, the creator god of Waset, was originally one of the Ogdoad – i.e., the original great gods of Iwnu (Heliopolis), where they were thought to have helped with creation, the died and retired to the Land of the Dead, where they continued to make the Nile flow and the sun rise every day. Therefore Amun became the most powerful god of the area. According to the priesthood's cosmological view, Amun changed from the invisible chaos deity into the primeval mound. In this form he created the other gods. He also created the lotus which opened to reveal the child form of Amun-Ra who then finished the creation of the world. Although he was a powerful force, Nun was thought to have been inert until Amun awoke him from torpor, and used his chaotic waters to create the universe.

Irrespective of the view on the pre-existence, the idea conveyed was simple: from the outside as well as from the inside, in the Egyptian mind creation was surrounded by the original state of preexistent and everlasting inert, watery darkness, and this was in all directions and all the time.

The liquid space was depicted as a vast chaos in a permanent limitless expanse. It is likely that it contained in itself the seeds of the creation. Nun appears to have been a chaotic state of affair with neither rule nor order in itself. Moreover, in Nun, Order could relapse at any moment. To the human mind, Nun appears as the opposite cliché category of order and light. This is why the Egyptians thought that the Cosmos, or the ordered, visible and manifested whole is constantly balancing “on the edge” of this abyss, although periods of extended peace were

⁴ The *bnw-bird*  was represented as a heron, and was thought to be the original phoenix - it was a bird of the sun and rebirth, the sacred bird of Heliopolis, closely linked to the primeval mound. It was also thought to be the Ba of both Ra and Osiris.

possible. The constant war of the forces and the divine and human elements did not lead to the destruction of the world, because for its own sake, “truth and justice” are given to its Creator.

Therefore Nun was seen as the opposite of Maat, or the Order and Balance that governed the Created, manifested World.

2. Maat and the Order

As a principle, Maat was conceived as the divine order and therefore expressed a ubiquitous concept of separating right from wrong, characterized by truth and respect for and adherence to a divine order thought to be set forth at the time of the world’s creation. This divine order was primarily conceived as modeled in a various environmental/agricultural and social relationships. It somehow resembles the underlying concepts of Taoism and Confucianism at times. Maat was central to the Egyptians’ understanding of the Universe, and their place within it. The name Maat is generally translated as “that which is straight”, or “truth”, but also implies “order”, “balance”, and “justice”. Maat personified the perfect order and harmony. She came into being when Ra rose from the waters of Chaos, and thus she was often described as a daughter of Ra. She was sometimes considered to be the wife of Djehwty, because he was the divine master of wisdom.

The Egyptians believed that the Universe was governed by Order and Balance. Each individual was duty bound to preserve and defend Maat, while the Pharaoh was thought to be his guardian.

Maat was generally depicted as a woman wearing a crown with a single ostrich feather, protruding from it.

3. Chaos versus Order

The ontology of precreation sketched in the Pyramid Texts involves however a degree of ambivalence: precreation is both the source of regeneration (first cause of creation), and a threatening chaos, for its darkness, death and disorder encapsulate the creation from all sides and all the time. As much as the visible, manifested flood of the Nile, Nun was both the origin of life (thanks to a “good Nile” with a balanced inundation), and cause of death (after long periods of too much or too little flood water). Just like the flood, it is a chaotic factor, implying that although its cycle can be mapped, it is impossible to determine the outcome of the function for any given place and date.

Nun however only appears to be a preexistent state into which no rule and no order can be found. As a state of the Universe, even a preexistent one, this apparent chaotic world is in fact a sort of virtual, primordial existence. As such, the chaos of Nun must be ruled by a particular kind of Order, even an imperceptible one.

4. The Butterfly Effect

The Egyptian funerary texts contain in themselves, at least on the philosophical level, some elements which prove a similarity between the modern cosmological thought and the ancient Egyptian ontogonical ideas.

Mutatis mutandis, it is likely that the preextant world of Nun was seen as a sort of virtual existence, out of time and out of space, and, most important, charged by creative energy. On this aspect, following the idea of the famous physicist Stephen Hawking, Amanda-Alice Maravelia⁵ thinks that:

“De cette façon, l’on pourrait comparer cette forme de preexistence virtuelle aux theories modernes cosmologiques qui parlent d’un vide energetique avant le Big Bang, plein de fluctuations quantiques (vacuum quantum, fluctuations), d’ou la singularite primordiale survint.”

While Susanne Bickel⁶ points out that “the preextant world is not defined by the absence of the created elements.”

That being said, a question arises: is it possible that, behind the chaos implied by Nun, one can find a particular kind of Order, proper to a created world? Could be Nun a hypostasis of Maat? Or viceversa?

According to modern science, the answer is yes. Scholars working in the new field of Chaos have learned that seemingly chaotic, lawless actions in the outer world followed, as a matter of fact, a hidden order. The order they found was fourfold. Consequently, they discovered that all outer phenomena are governed by what they call the four “attractors”, i.e., forces which bring order out of disorder. The four were called: the point attractor, the cycle or circuit attractor, the torus attractor, and the strange attractor. They are in accordance with the four psychological functions of being:

Point – feeling
Cycle – thinking
Torus – sensing
Strange – willing

They form a basic Constitutional Law of the outer world.

Scientists held that “chaos” is difficult to define. In fact, it is much easier to list the properties a system described as “chaotic” has, rather than to give a precise definition of chaos. For example, Bai-Lin Hao⁷ describes chaos (roughly) as “a kind of order without periodicity”.

Systems “ruled” by the laws of the chaos are featured by unpredictability. This idea gave rise to the notion of a butterfly flapping its wings in one area of the world, causing a tornado or

⁵ Maravelia 2006: 392-393

⁶ Bickel 1994: 57-60

⁷ 1998

some such weather event to occur in another remote area of the world. This was called the butterfly effect – commonly associated with the weather system as this is where the discovery of “non-linear” phenomenon began when Edward Lorenz found anomalies in computer models of the weather. But Henri Poincaré⁸ had already made inroads into this area. Mapping the results in “phase space” produced a two-lobe map called the Lorenz Attractor. The word attractor meaning that events tended to be attracted towards the two lobes, and events outside of the lobes are such things like snow in the desert.

The attractor acts like an egg whisk, tearing apart parameters that may initially be close together – this is why the weather is so hard to predict.

However it is not just the weather that is subject to such phenomena. Any “Newtonian classical” system where one system is in competition with another will exhibit sensitivity to initial conditions. Therefore the Butterfly Effect is the propensity of a system in our Universe to be sensitive to initial conditions.

Natural systems can present a tangled mix of determinism and randomness, or *order* and *chaos*.

To better understand the attractors and how they fashion order from chaos, we have to understand the laws of disorder. This allows us to appreciate the inherent flexibility of Law. The new discoveries from the Science of Chaos make it clear that the Laws of nature are not rigid as once thought – instead they are flexible. As the American jurist Roscoe Pound put it⁹:

”Law must be stable, and yet it cannot stand still.”

The world is not a gigantic clock where everything happens in an ordered and predictable manner. The real world is fundamentally disordered and free. Chaos reigns over predictability. Simple, linear systems which are causal and predictable are the exception in the Universe, not the rule. Most of the Universe functions irregularly, in a non-linear fashion that can not be exactly predicted. It is infinitely complex: freedom and free will – the Strange Attractor – prevail over rules and determinacy. Yet Chaos is not the enemy and certainly not the destroyer of Cosmos either. For from out of chaos a higher order always appears, but this order comes spontaneously, and unpredictably. It is “self-organized”.

The creation of the Universe is an ongoing process, not just a one-time event at the beginning. All and everything – and everyone – is part of this creative process. Over time all systems – from molecules to life, to galactic clusters –are continually creating new organizations and patterns from out of featurelessness and chaos. The Universe is governed by Laws and Order, and Balance, but one who leaves room for creativity within certain general parameters, i.e. Chaos and Randomness.

⁸ In his 1905 famous book *La valeur de la science* (reprinted 1999)

⁹ From the opening sentence of Roscoe Pound’s monumental treatise, *Interpretations of Legal History* vol. 17 Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1967

5. Nun and Maat: the wings of the butterfly

Due to these recent discoveries on the field of chaos, it is likely to put the ancient Egyptian ideas on chaos and order in a new light, giving them some new insights.

Thus the Egyptian way of thinking and their Universe are no longer understood as static, as Henri Frankfort has suggested in 1948.¹⁰

“The Egyptian held that he lived in a changeless world, and only the changeless is ultimately significant.”

We now are capable to state that in so far as the source of Maat is Nun itself, so inside the Egyptian thought changeless is based on the seeds of Nun's chaotic fluctuations.

Only in this way the Order that governed the invisible world of forces and metaphysical principles called “gods” can be mapped into the world of humans. The history of Ancient Egypt proves this fact by the outstanding periods of growth and stability that have alternated with times of social disorder and wars.

Therefore the Balance of *zep tepy* could to continue as an ongoing process in the human world, and the Laws of Chaos to be converted into the Law of Maat. One might understand this as the Egyptian concept of immortality and eternity in the human, visible life.

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¹⁰ Frankfort 1948

Gnostic Dualism – the Great Myth of Light and Darkness

Silviu Lupașcu

Summary:

This essay, dedicated to the Gnostic Dualism, attempts to reconstitute the history of the Great Myth of Light and Darkness, as it is contained in the history of the religious ideas. A sum of Gnostic texts is invoked, from the Syrian-Egyptian branch of Gnosticism, as well as from the Iranian branch of Gnosticism. The basic structure of this archaic Myth and its multiple versions are thrown into relief, with a special emphasis on the unity of its essence, of its major religious and spiritual themes, of its theological framework. The difficult problem of the origins of Gnosticism is approached as well, against the background of the major religious spaces which were involved in the Gnostic syncretism: Egypt, Judaism, Iran, the Hellenistic world, Christianity. The survival of the Gnostic Dualism in Medieval Islam and in the ideological realm of modern and contemporary philosophy is also pointed out. The archaic Myth of Light and Darkness, hidden in the spiritual texture of the universal history of ideas, awaits to be uncovered.

Kurt Rudolph defined the Gnostic dualism as “anti-cosmic”, meaning that the Gnostic theology includes an unequivocal negative evaluation of the created world and its Creator, the Evil Demiurge, who is radically different from the Good God, Foreign, Unknown, or Occulted, yet paradoxically almighty in the hierarchy of dualist theocracy. From this point of view, the geocentric cosmos, situated underneath the ninth heaven¹ - where the paradisiacal space is also included, beyond which lies the Kingdom of God -, is identified as a Kingdom of Evil and Darkness, while the matter is valued, following the human-angelic falling into sinfulness, as a receptacle of evil². With his classification, Hans Jonas has distinguished the “Syrian-Egyptian” Gnostic systems (the *Nag Hammadi Library*³) from the “Iranian” Gnostic systems (Manichaeism, Mandaism). Concerning the first type, the origin of Evil and the Powers of Darkness appertains to the climax of an ontological involution or descending process, from the Primordial or Supreme Divinity to a material level, initially inside the sphere of divinity (*Pleroma*, “Plenitude”), and later beyond its limit (*horos*), inside the new open space of the geocentric cosmos, composed of the eight celestial⁴ spheres. The Primordial Divinity, which

¹ In most of the Gnostic myths, the number of the sub-paradisiacal “heavens” or “spheres” varies between seven and ten.

² Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1984, p.60.

³ The *Nag Hammadi Library* is a collection of Gnostic manuscripts, discovered in 1945, in Egypt, near the village of Al-Qasr, and preserved today in the Coptic Museum of Cairo, under UNESCO supervision.

⁴ The eight celestial spheres (*Ogdoad*) of the geocentric cosmos were illustrated in the “diagram of the Ophites” (cf. gr. *ophis*, “snake”, symbol of the cyclic Universe or *ouroboros*, “the snake that bites its own tail”), a Christian-Gnostic sect dated in the 2nd-4th centuries CE. The “diagram of the Ophites” was described by Origen, in *Contra*

manifests itself through the ontological-emanationist process, is pictured either as a Masculin Divinity (*Propator*⁵), or as a Feminine Divinity (*Barbelo*)⁷. Concerning the second type, the Principles of Good and Evil have coexisted since the beginning of the Universe, they configure two spaces, characterized by the dynamics of a mythological antagonism, separated by a system of limits and reciprocal exclusions, dictated by the divine will: the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. At the level of the Primordial Divinity ("The Father of Might") the pre-cosmogonical crisis consisting of the intrusion of the Darkness into the Light is triggered, a crisis which is countered by the manifestation of the ontological labyrinth that led to the establishment of the Feminine Principle ("Mother of Life") and the Masculine Principle ("Primordial Man", *Ohrmazd*). The Masculine Principle, hypostasized as the "*Anthropos* myth", determines the continuation of the divine ontology through the process of involution which manifests the cosmic-human ontology, at the climax of which the Primordial Man faces the Powers of Darkness, in obedience to the order received from the King of Light. Hans Jonas' classification couldn't be more than experimental, because the Gnostic theological systems belonging to the "Iranian" and "Syrian-Egyptian" types can be reduced to common narrative-mythological patterns and logics: the ontological involution from the Primordial Divinity to the cosmic-human level, the masculine-feminine hypostasis of the Primordial Divinity, the Good / Evil, Light / Darkness dichotomy, the fall of the human nature's prototype (the Primordial Man) and the fall of the human nature itself (*Adam*) from the sphere of Good / Light to the sphere of Evil / Darkness, the ontological-substantial continuity, after the fall, between the Primordial Divinity and the human soul, the conceiving of a divine strategy which aims to the redemption of the human soul and of all the particles of Light that have fallen into the Kingdom of Matter, Evil, Darkness, through the Messiah of Light (*Ohrmazd*, Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of the Light, *salvator salvatus*), who is sent over by the Primordial Divinity as the bearer of salvation through knowledge (*Gnosis*) and the embodiment of salvation through knowledge (*Nous*).

As a soteriological, mythological, pseudo-epigraphical dialogue between Jesus Christ and John, the son of Zebedee, the *Apocryphon of John*⁸ describes the Primordial Divinity as "the *Monada*", a "monarchy above which there is nothing else", "God and Father of the Whole", "the unseen One, Who resides above the Whole". The Divine Father is identified with the "pure Light, that no eye can ever watch", He is "eternally and absolutely perfect within the Light" and the "eon giver of eons". The thought of the Father "executes an action" and *Barbelo* manifests herself from the Light of the Father's glow. It is the "premeditation of the Whole", the "first

Celsum, VI, 25-38 and reconstituted by Herbert Leisegang and Kurt Rudolph. Herbert Leisegang, *La Gnose*, Paris: Payot, 1971, pp. 168-173; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 67-70.

⁵ The Celestial Father.

⁶ Herbert Leisegang explains the etymology of the word *Barbelo* through *Barbhe Eloha* (ebr.), "God has four parts". Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 55-83. Saran Alexandrian described each pair (*syzygia*) of the eons that form the *Pleroma* (Plenitude), the sphere of divinity, in the Valentinian Gnostic theology. Saran Alexandrian, *Histoire de la philosophie occulte*, Paris: Seghers, 1983, pp. 25-97.

⁷ Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I-II, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954-1966, I, pp. 33-37, p. 96, pp. 123-127.

⁸ The *Apocryphon of John* is a Christian-Gnostic, pseudo-epigraphic Coptic text, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*. The oldest versions of this text are dated before the year 185 CE, when Irenaeus of Lyon wrote *Adversus haereses*, a work of the Latin Patrology which mentions the Gnostic doctrine of the *Apocryphon*.

Divine Power”, the “picture and glorification of the Virgin Spirit”, the “eternal eon” and “glory of the eons”, “the womb of the Whole”, the divine androgynous reality, gifted with Mother-Father attributes, which contains the potential existence of the Primordial Man. *Barbelo* is vested by the Unseen Spirit with the “*Pentada* of the Father’s eons”: the first prototype of the Primordial Man, Premeditation, Indestructibility, Eternal Life, the Truth. The Spirit-Father and *Barbelo* will conceive, from the Light, the Father’s First Born, *Christ*, *Autogenes*, Pure Light, from whom the twelve eons will emanate, the eon-angels *Armozal*, *Oriel*, *Daveithai*, *Eleleth*, and the Second prototype of the Primordial Man, *Pigera-Adamas*. With the *Pleroma* in the background, which was born from the Light of the Primordial Divinity, *Sophia* detaches herself from the *syzygia* (“pair”) that joins her to the masculinity of the Unseen Spirit, chooses a volitional, chaotic trajectory and conceives *Yaldabaoth*, the Evil Demiurge or the Archon of this world, the monstrous Creator (“a snake with the face of a lion”) of the cosmos and of the hierarchy of the Archons, the eons of evil, who govern in a tyrannical manner the seven “heavens” or celestial spheres and the five levels of the Abyss, being guarded by the demonic armies. The pre-cosmogonical tragedy reveals itself as a mixture of Light and Darkness: “When the Light was mixed with Darkness, it made the Darkness shine. When Darkness invaded the Light, it clouded the Light and the result was something neither dark nor bright, but clear-obscure.” The preexistent Light resides in *Yaldabaoth* himself, whose wickedness, determined by ignorance, impels him to consider himself as the Creator and the autocrat of the Universe, to ignore his status as the usurper of the throne of the *Ogdoad*, as well as the true omnipotent and omniscient theocracy of the Good and Light, exercised by the Divine Father and *Barbelo* above *Yaldabaoth*’s pseudo-authority. This is why the Light that has fallen into *Yaldabaoth*’s own metabolism is not subjected to *Yaldabaoth*’s commands, but to the commands received from the Divine Father and *Barbelo*. When *Yaldabaoth* experiences the thought of creating *Adam*, the Primordial Man, in truth it is the Divine Father who sends to him this thought through the descended Light. And when *Yaldabaoth* indeed creates *Adam*, this action is not accomplished by the will of the Evil Demiurge, it is the Divine Father’s will who manifests the will of the Light and commands over the obscure Light which is trapped within the Evil Demiurge. At the very essence of *Yaldabaoth*’s action of bequeathing the spirit of life to *Adam* stands the action of the Divine Father, the One Who really conceives the animation of the Adamic dust with the purpose of extracting and releasing the Light that was stolen by *Yaldabaoth* from *Barbelo*. Therefore, although *Adam* is predestined to a “clear-obscured” ontology during his pre-apocalyptic life, a being that contains Light and Darkness alike, his birth is a revolt of the Light against the Darkness, a manifestation of the Divine Father’s Light, which reflects inside the Kingdom of Evil and Darkness the brilliance of the divine substance embodied in the two prototypes of the Primordial Man. Although *Adam*’s soul is a hypostasis and a power of the Light, guarded by the eons and angels of goodness, his material body is a hypostasis and a power of the Darkness, guarded by the eons and angels of wickedness. Through the instrumentality of the Unseen Spirit, the Divine Father sends “the bright *Epinoia*” or “the bright Thought” as *Gnosis* or saving knowledge down to the human level of existence, in order to be embodied in the soul of *Adam*, in *Eve* and in the tree of knowledge, located in the Paradise ruled by the Archons. *Eve* is violated by *Yaldabaoth* and gives birth to two sons of the Archons, *Eloim*, master of water and earth, and *Yave*, master of fire and wind. From *Sophia*’s adultery with the Archons emerges the ill-fate of

the human beings, circumscribed by the realm of matter, doomed to be the sum of all sins, injustices, blasphemies, and the origin of forgetfulness which is intended to separate the human beings from their Homeland of Light. Due to the fact that the evil angels cavorted with the daughters of men, the darkness threatens to overwhelm the light in the composition of the human beings, so men grow old without knowing the joy of life and later die without discovering the Truth. The Evil Demiurge reveals himself as the protector of the sexual intercourse between the human beings or between the Archons-angels and the human beings, because the multiplication of the bodies is essential in order to achieve the chaining of the souls, which are intoxicated by lust and pleasure in the obscure physical world. Therefore only the incorruptible souls, that are free from sexual lust, will be worthy of receiving the Spirit of Light, the invitation to reenter the “pure Light”, the gift of the eternal life, in the Kingdom of the Divine Father. The Spirit of Life will also descend upon the lost souls; it will annihilate the Archons’ powers, so that the souls can find their way back to the Light. The awakening, *anamnesis* and receiving of *Gnosis* will be the only chance of salvation for the souls that have gone so deep into the Darkness that they have forgotten about their origin of Light, being imprisoned by the Archons. Only the souls that have dedicated themselves to blasphemy will be forever doomed. The dark flood that *Yaldabaoth* brought upon the world is counteracted by Noah, through “the might of the Light of foreknowledge”. In this apocalyptic context, Jesus Christ is revealed as the *Pronoia* (“Foresight”, “Anticipation”), the “recollection of the *Pleroma*”, the Messiah sent by the Divine Father, who accomplishes a triple descent into the Kingdom of Darkness, in the center of the prison, in order to shake the very foundation of chaos. The victory of the Light over Darkness is not tantamount to an absolute destruction of the Evil Principle, but to the salvation of the human souls that are a part of the “established race”, and also to their ascending absorption into the Kingdom of Light: “I am the *Pronoia* of the pure Light, the contemplation of the Virgin Spirit that has elevated you to this place of glory. Arise and remember that you have heard Me, you have followed your roots, within Myself, the Merciful One. Guard yourselves against the angels of nothingness and the demons of chaos and against all those who ensnare you, beware of the deep sleep and the enclosure inside of *Hades*.”⁹

The “Two Principles”¹⁰ and the “Three Times”¹¹ sum up the quintessential of the founding myth of the religion preached by Mani or Manes (216 – 274 / 277 CE), with its whole train of tragic, spectacular, lustful and horrible events that define the destinies of both Man and the Universe, before the coming of the eternal bliss encompassed by the apocalyptic denouement. In a pre-cosmogonical state (“before Heaven or Earth”), the Principle of Good or the “Father of Greatness” inhabits the Kingdom of Light, constituted of five “abodes”, spaces, or eons of Good: Reason, Knowledge, Thought, Imagination, Reflection. The Principle of Evil is the “Monarch of Darkness”, the Lord of the Kingdom of Darkness, constituted of the five eons

⁹ *The Apocryphon of John*, II, 1, III, 1, IV, 1, BG 8502, 2, in James M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden: Brill, 1988, pp. 104-123.

¹⁰ Light and Darkness.

¹¹ The “Previous Time”, when the world hadn’t been born and the Light was separated from Darkness. The “Medium Time” or “Intermediate Time”, when the Darkness invades the Kingdom of Light. The “Afterwards Time” or Apocalyptic Time, when Light and Darkness will irrevocably break apart once again, and the Principle of Evil will be damned for eternity. The origin of this doctrine is undoubtedly to be found in Zurvanism.

of Evil: Smoke, Fire, Wind, Water and Darkness. This static equilibrium is annihilated when the Monarch of Darkness has the initiative to rise and penetrate inside the Kingdom of Light. The Father of Greatness decides to join Himself the battle between Good and Evil, so He ontologically and externally conceives the Mother of Life, who will conceive, in her turn, the Primordial Man, who will call into being his five Sons, five hypostasis of the Light. Supervised by the angel *Nachashbat*, the Primordial Man engages the Monarch of Darkness for the first time, but the five Sons of Light are swallowed up by the five Sons of Darkness, and this defeat is epitomized by the immersion of the first parts of Light into the Kingdom of Darkness. Although poisoned by the Darkness, the Primordial Man still addresses the Father of Greatness through prayer, once he has regained his rationality. The Powers of Light regroup and the Father of Greatness calls up reinforcements, the Friend of the Light, the Great Architect, the Living Spirit, who will conceive his five Sons from the eons of good: the Adornment of Light from Reason, the King of Honor from Knowledge, the Light *Adamas* from Thought, the King of Glory from Imagination and the Bearer from Reflection. During an incursion inside the Kingdom of Darkness, the Sons of the Living Spirit will find the Primordial Man along with his Sons, overwhelmed by Darkness. In the shape of a sharp sword, the Voice of the Living Spirit will inform the Primordial Man about the divine strategy which had been devised in order to accomplish the salvation of the Light: "Greetings to you, Good Man, you who find yourself surrounded by the Evil. Oh, being of Light, you who abide amidst Darkness! (...) / Come forth and bring us our salvation, since you bear the burden of salvation and peace!" The Living Spirit commands his Sons to destroy the Archons, the Sons of Darkness, to rip them apart and present them to the Mother of Life. After the Sons of Light triumph in the second battle, the Mother of Life accomplishes the cosmogonical task of creating ten heavens from the skins that once belonged to the Sons of Darkness and of throwing their bodies back to the Kingdom of Darkness, where the Sons of Light will transform them into eight earths. The Living Spirit recovers and purifies the Light from the demons' bodies, turns it into a Sun, a Moon and a thousand stars, and achieves the metamorphosis of the three eons of Evil into three eons or spheres of the Light (Fire, Water, Wind). The cosmogony ends with the assigning of the celestial Light-giving bodies and of the spheres involved into the cyclic movements of the Universe, as well as the jailing of the Archons inside the "earths". Subsequently the Mother of Life, the Primordial Man and the Living Spirit ask the Father of Greatness to create the Messianic Messenger, a being predestined to win the third battle against Darkness, the *casus belli* of which is the creation and redemption of *Adam*. The Great Architect builds the New Earth along with three new spheres, with the purpose of lifting the Sun and the Moon, the "vehicles" inhabited by the Messenger, to the centre of the sky, a privileged place where the Messenger manifests its masculine and feminine forms, in order to be contemplated by all the Archons, the Sons of Darkness, who are filled with the sexual desires triggered by his own beauty, without being able to reach him and have a sexual intercourse: the feminine Archons are attracted by his masculine forms, and the male Archons are attracted by his feminine forms. The theocratical purpose behind this display of messianic sexuality resides in the will of the Father of Greatness to compel the Archons to eliminate the Light, through ejaculation, in order that the extraction and redemption of the Light might be accomplished, of the primordial Light that the Archons stole from the offspring of the Primordial Man after the first battle between Light and Darkness. Mixed with the sin through the

metabolism of the Archons, the recovered Light is purged by the Messenger and cosmologically-chronologically treasured into the “vehicle” of the Moon, hypostasized as the full Moon, transferred to the “vehicle” of the Sun and further on, into the Kingdom of Light. The purpose of this entire cosmic system of gears is the opening and functioning of the celestial ascending structures through which the lost Light of the Primordial Man is extracted from the dark Kingdom of Evil and returned to the Father of Greatness. The Messenger occults his beauty, but the feminine Archons, the Daughters of Darkness, who became pregnant just by contemplating the Messenger’s beauty, spread their monstrous progenies over the surface of the Earth. Two of the Archons, *Nekbael* and *Ashaklun*, devour the first generation of the demonic progenies and conceive a son and a daughter, born of *Nekbael*, *Adam* and *Havva* (*Eve*). The Messenger reveals himself as Jesus-Light, awakens *Adam* from his death-like slumber and banishes the Archons and the demons from his body. Awakened, *Adam* experiences an ontological *anamnesis* under the guidance of Jesus-Light, he is reminded that his origin is in the Kingdom of Light, he acknowledges himself as a particle of the Light detached from the Primordial Man’s offspring, swallowed by the Sons of Darkness and freed by the Messenger that the Father of Greatness had sent. *Adam*’s redemption is accomplished when he eats from the fruit of the Tree of Life, following the advice received from Jesus-Light, thus overthrowing the order of evil within his own being and gaining the strength to make the ontological leap from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of Light¹². In the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*¹³, Mani will rewrite the mythological War between Light and Darkness *à la manière des vainqueurs*: in the first battle, the Principle of Evil was dislocated from the Kingdom of Darkness; in the second battle, the Enemy was ripped apart and thrown into the Great Fire and all of its hypostasis and images were annihilated forever; in the third battle, which initiates the apocalyptic ending, the male Archons were captured inside a sphere (*bolos*), and the female Archons were locked inside a tomb. In this way, the Monarch of Darkness will be “chained for eternity” in a “great and painful bondage”¹⁴.

The Syrian-Egyptian and the Iranian Gnostic myths can be reduced to a common logical-narrative structure. In fact, they reveal themselves as two versions of the same Great founding Myth, which elucidates the essential matters concerning the Gnostic theogony-theology, cosmogony-cosmology, anthropogony-anthropology, as well as the origin of Evil, the history of salvation and the apocalyptic denouement:

The perfect equilibrium of the Primordial Divinity, the Divine Father (*Propator*, “Father of Greatness”), in the Kingdom of Good and Light;

¹² Theodor Bar Konai (ca. 770-810), *Scholia*, in A. Scher (ed.), *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri*, Series II, Tom 66, Paris-Leipzig, 1912, *Liber Scriptorum*, XI, 313-318; Robert Haardt, *Gnosis*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971, pp. 289-296; Willis Barnstone (ed.), *The Other Bible*, New York: Harper Collins, 1975-1983, I, pp. 360-385.

¹³ The *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, a writing found at Medinet Madi, in Egypt, in the year 1930, contains the “heading” or main thesis of Manichaean mythology and theology, in words that were spoken by Mani on his death bed and written down by his disciples. The Coptic Manuscript, based on a Greek or Syriac *Vorlage*, which is missing at this time, is preserved in the State Museum of Berlin. Other sections of the *Kephalaia* can be found in the Chester Beatty Collection.

¹⁴ H. J. Polotsky, A. Böhlig (ed.), *Kephalaia. I*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940; A. Böhlig (ed.), *Kephalaia. II*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966; Haardt, *Gnosis*, pp. 333-334; Barnstone, *The Other Bible*, p. 689.

The act of the external ontological projection of the Divine Mother (*Barbelo*, “Mother of Life”) by the Divine Father;

The act of the external ontological projection of the good eons (in pairs of masculine and feminine eons), as well as the sphere of Divinity (the *Pleroma*, the Powers of the Light, the angels of Good), by the will of the Divine Father;

The preexistence or the accidental coming into being (the chaotic movement of *Barbelo*, the licentiousness of *Sophia*) of the Principle of Evil (*Yaldabaoth*, the “Monarch of Darkness”, the “Evil Demiurge”) and his reign of tyranny over the Kingdom of Darkness and Evil;

The act of the ontological projection, outside the Principle of Evil, of the evil eons, of the hierarchy of Evil (the Archons, the angels of Evil) and of the cosmos (the *Ogdoad*);

The fall of the Light into the Darkness, the intrusion or the invasion of the Darkness into the Light;

The War between Light and Darkness, in order to liberate the Light which is chained inside the Darkness and to save the Primordial Man and the human souls; the descending movement of the Primordial Man, at the vanguard of the Light;

The interlude of demonic sexuality; the fashioning of *Adam* after the divine prototype of the Primordial Man, through the tragic “clear-obscure” mixture between Light and Darkness; the birth of the ancestors of the human race (*Adam* and *Eve*) from the demonic beings that have imprisoned the Light;

The descent of the Messianic Messenger (identified with Jesus Christ in the Christian-Gnostic systems that often contain Docetistic¹⁵ versions of the crucifixion; the Son of the Light or the Son of Greatness, *salvator salvatus*, in the pre-Christian or non-Christian Gnostic systems) from the Primordial Divinity or Divine Father;

The triumph of the Powers of Light over the Powers of Darkness: the salvation of the Primordial Man, the salvation of *Adam* and of all the human souls through the ascending way of the pure Light after an awakening experience consisting of *anamnesis* and the acquiring of *Gnosis*;

The apocalyptic separation, for the eternity, of the Kingdom of Light and Good from the Kingdom of Darkness and Evil; the eternal damnation of the Principle of Evil.

The endeavor to build a “Gnostic Concordance” is able to identify concordances which are susceptible to throw into relief this logical-narrative structure in most of the Gnostic writings. The spectacular fresco of the Light / Darkness dualism is included in the *Paraphrase of Shem*¹⁶, which contains a vast pre-cosmogonical passage concerning the Primordial Divinity, named the “Greatness”, and the Savior, named *Derdekeas*, the “Son of the Greatness” and the “Son of the

¹⁵ A branch of the Christian Gnosticism, the Docetism states that a “copy” (gr. *Dokeos*) of Jesus was crucified instead of the real Jesus, or even a human substitute (Simon of Cyrene). The *Qur'an*. S. IV – *Women*, vv. 155-157, also contains a Docetistic version of the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of Mary, *Isa Ibn Myriam*. Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 95.

¹⁶ *The Paraphrase of Shem* is a pseudo-epigraphic Christian-Gnostic writing, written in Coptic, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*. It is conceived as a dialogue between the Savior and Shem. This Gnostic apocalypse was written between the 1st-4th centuries CE.

Infinite Light”, the divine prototype of Jesus¹⁷. Following the prayer that the Savior addresses to the Greatness and to the Infinite Light, the “Pleroma of the Word” is vested with the authority to carry the Power of the Light to the “members” of the Light, situated in the Kingdom of Darkness¹⁸. The Heaven and the Earth are created by the Nature, a hypostasis of the Principle of Darkness, within the “Dark Womb”, in the contemplative presence of the Son of the Greatness, who will reduce the creative attributes of Nature to nothing and will insert the Powers of the Light¹⁹ into the cosmos. An orgiastic episode unites the forms of Nature to the Powers of Darkness into a “sexual act of doom”, as a consequence of which the winds, the demonic creatures and the human beings are brought into being. But the Spirit and the Infinite Light will not allow the creation of man to be accomplished exclusively by the Darkness, thus the Spirit will reflect Himself into the water and the earth, and the human being as a whole will have a “clear-obscure” composition: a part will be constituted by the “winds and demons”, while the other part will be constituted by the “thought of the Light”²⁰. Through the Savior’s actions the Infinite Light will triumph over the Darkness, at the level of the human micro-cosmos²¹, as well as at the level of the macro-cosmos²². *The Hymn of the Pearl*²³ describes the journey of the

¹⁷ *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 1, 25 – 7, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 324-344: “There was Light (masc.), there was Darkness (masc.), and the Spirit (masc.) was among them. (...) the Light was a thought full of hearing and words. These were united in a single form. And the Darkness was wind inside the waters. He possessed the Mind, which was surrounded by a chaotic fire. And the Spirit that was among them was a gentle and humble Light. These are the three roots. (...) But the Light, because He possessed a great power, experienced the degradation and disorder of Darkness, namely the fact that His root was crooked. The crookedness of Darkness consists of His lack of perception, namely of the illusion that no one else resides above Him. And as long as He (the Darkness) had been endowed with the power to endure His own evil, He (the Darkness) was covered by the water. He (the Darkness) had moved. The Spirit was terrified by the noise. By the will of the Might, the Spirit contemplated the Infinite Light (...) and then (...) I flooded the whole space, I, the Son of the Greatness, like a wave of the brilliant Light, like a whirlpool of the Immortal Spirit.”

¹⁸ *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 12, 25 – 14, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 347.

¹⁹ *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 19, 20 – 21, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 349-350: “They have found Me, the Son of the Greatness, in front of the womb with many shapes. (...) She (Nature) blew over the water. The Sky was created. And out of the Sky’s foam, the Earth was brought into being.”

²⁰ *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 21, 15 – 24, 10, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 350-351: “And when her (Nature’s) forms had returned, they rubbed their tongues with one another, they copulated and gave birth to the winds and demons (...). (...) a womb existed together with the winds that resembled the water. And an impure penis was together with the demons (...). But the winds, which are demons (...), committed the sexual act of doom. And through this sexual act, the winds received inside their wombs foam from the penis of the demons. (...) Thanks to you (human beings), the image of the Spirit appeared in the earth and the water. Because you resemble to the Light. Because you possess a part from the winds and demons and a part from the thought of the Light (...).”

²¹ *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 42, 25 – 43, 25, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 359: “Those who have a clear conscience will stay away from the mumblings of Nature. (...) they will throw away the burden of Darkness, they will clothe themselves with the Word of the Light and will not be kept anymore in the insignificant place.”

²² *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 45, 10 – 48, 30, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 360-361: “(...) The evil Darkness will become useless and silent. And in the last day, the forms of Nature will be destroyed along with the winds and all their demons. All these will become a dark heap, as

“Mother’s and the Father’s Son”, from the “Kingdom of the Orient” (the Kingdom of Light), to Egypt (the Kingdom of Darkness), with the purpose of saving and bringing back to the Oriental homeland the “Pearl” (the human spirit) which was guarded by a snake in the middle of the sea. This *Hymn* of the Gnostic pilgrimage illustrates the redemptive scenario of the *salvator salvatus* or the “redeemed redeemer” type: the First Savior (the Son), who lands as a “stranger” in Egypt, forgets his mission along with his imperial origin and falls asleep; the awakening and recollection through *Gnosis* is initiated within the Son by the Second Messenger, the “letter” that the Father has sent from the Orient, in the form of an eagle. Triumphant in the end, the Son will return to the Orient with the “Pearl”, he will take off his “Egyptian clothes” and wear the imperial garment²⁴ once again. *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*²⁵ describes the pre-cosmogonical state as restfulness of the “Perfect Greatness” in the “ineffable Light” and in “the truth of the Mother of all of these things”. *Sophia*’s cosmogonical luxuriousness occurs without the acceptance of the *Pleroma* and the salvation process will be accomplished through the sending of Jesus – the Son of Light from the “ineffable Monad” to the “monads” of the Light which had fallen into the Darkness²⁶. Jesus Christ descends as a “stranger” who changes one “form” after another, inside the Kingdom of the Archons, governed by *Yaldabaoth*, the Creator of *Adam*, the Cosmocrator that ignores the infinite theocracy of the “Father of the Truth” and of the “Man of the Greatness”²⁷. The attack aimed by *Yaldabaoth* and the Archons against Jesus

they were in the very beginning. When the annihilation will come, and Nature will be destroyed, their thoughts (of the redeemed human beings) will be separated from the Darkness. Nature had burdened them only for a short time. And they will find themselves in the ineffable Light of the unborn Spirit, without a shape.”

²³ *The Hymn of the Pearl* is a versified tale about the Salvation of the Human Soul and its return to the Universal Soul. Initially indited in Syriac, the text was later translated into Greek and included in the *The Acts of Thomas*, a pseudo-epigraphical Christian writing with strong Gnostic influences, composed at the beginning of the 3rd century CE, in Syria. Mani was still alive when this writing was added to the spiritual treasury of Manichaeism.

²⁴ “The Hymn of the Pearl”, *The Acts of Thomas*, 108-114, in Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), Robert McLachlan Wilson (trans.) *New Testament Apocrypha*, I-II, Cambridge, UK / Louisville, Kentucky, USA: James Clarke & Co., Westminster / John Knox Press, 1991-1992, II, pp. 380 – 385: “(The Letter) soared like a vulture, the king of the birds. It sat down near me and became language. When I heard its voice and sounds of its movement I woke up from my slumber, I held it and kissed it, I tore it open and started reading from this letter. The letter contained the very words that were in my heart, in order that I may read them. I was reminded that I was the Emperors’ Son and my soul started to long after its own race. I remembered the Pearl for which I came to Egypt (...).”

²⁵ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* is a pseudo-epigraphical Christian-Gnostic writing, indited in Coptic, which is included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*. Conceived in the form of a discourse uttered by Jesus Christ (identified in the title with Seth, although this name isn’t mentioned) in front of an audience of Gnostic believers, this revelation with polemical accents is dated in the 1st-3rd centuries CE.

²⁶ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 49, 15 – 15, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 363: “Because those (the inferior regions) that were found in the world, were prepared by the will our sister *Sophia*, who is a whore (...). And she asked nothing, neither from the Whole, nor from the Greatness of the gathering, or from the *Pleroma*. As long as she was the first one, she came forward in order to prepare monads and places for the coming of the Son of Light. (...). But because they came into being into vainglory, these ended up in destruction, in the places where they were situated, because they were prepared by *Sophia*. They are ready to receive the life-giving word from the Ineffable Monad (...).”

²⁷ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 51, 20 – 55, 10, 64, 15 – 65, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 364-365, pp. 368-369: “It was not possible for them to understand who was the Father of Truth, the Man of Greatness. (...) But they, the Archons, those who inhabit

through the crucifixion is doomed to failure, due to a Docetistic strategy conceived by the Powers of the Light²⁸. Jesus, the “altogether Blessed One” by the “Eternal Father” and the “Infinite Light”, will destroy the Archons according to the Father’s will, because the Archons do not have access to the “Knowledge of the Greatness”²⁹. When the whole creation will experience the fulfillment of the apocalyptical time, Jesus, the “Son of Man”, the “Monad”, will be triumphant against *Yaldabaoth* and the Archons, because they failed to acknowledge the founding principle of the infinite space inhabited by the Almighty Father, which circumscribes the *Ogdoad*: “light unites with light, and darkness with darkness; the defiled unites with the perishable, and the imperishable unites with the undefiled”³⁰. *Ginza Rabba*³¹ describes the emanation of the “Life” (*haiyi*, multiplied from the “First Life” to the “Fourth Life”), the “Water of Life” (the Jordan River) and the Living Fire out of the “Kingdom of Light” (descended from the Great Fruit of the Primordial Divinity), surrounded by the “beings of the Light” or *uthri*. The fall of the stairs of the Light from the Second Life to the Fourth Life will have as its outcome the founding of the “Dark Place”, ruled by “The Evil Spirit” or *Ruha*, from which the Emperor of Darkness (*Ur* or *Ptahil-Uthra*) will emanate, as entities that have deserted the “Kingdom of Light”. Inside the “Dark Place”, *Ptahil-Uthra* will create the cosmos which contains the Earth (*Tibil*), the seven planetary spheres and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and he will also create *Adam* whose body is fashioned by the Powers of Darkness, while his soul has its origin in the “Kingdom of Light”, in the divine prototype of *Adam*, named *Adakas*, the “Hidden *Adam*” or the “Estranged Man”. The “Sons of Darkness”, masters of the “Dark Place”, ready their war chariots and weapons for the assault against the “Place of Light”. In order to counter this attack, the

together with *Yaldabaoth*, reveal the kingdom of the angels (angels of evil) (...). (...) *Adam*, to whom they (the Archons) gave form, appeared in front of them. (...) And then a voice – of the Cosmocrator – came towards the angels (angels of evil): ‘I am God and no one else stands by my side’. But I (Jesus Christ) laughed joyfully, when I understood his vainglory.”

²⁸ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 55, 10 – 56, 30, 58, 15 – 59, 20, 65, 5 – 65, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 365-366, p. 369: “Yes, they have seen Me, they have punished Me. It was someone else (...), it was not Me. They hit Me with the reed. It was someone else, Simon (of Cyrene), who carried the cross on his shoulders. It was someone else, the one on whose head they put the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing on high because of all the wealth of the Archons and the fruits of their error, of their vainglory. I was laughing at their ignorance.”

²⁹ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 56, 20 – 61, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 366-367: “Since they (the Archons) did not know the Knowledge of Greatness, which is from on high and from a fountain of Truth (...).”

³⁰ *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 65, 15 – 69, 30, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 369-370: “I am Christ, the Son of Man, the One who is from among you, who resides among you. (...) I am Christ, the Son of Man, who is praised above the heavens.”

³¹ *Ginza Rabba* (“The Great Treasure”) or *Sidra Rabba* (“The Great Book”) is one of the most important Mandaean sacred writings. The Mandaeans (*mandayi*, “Gnostics”), also called *nasurayi* (“guardians” or “keepers” of the “Gnosis of Life”, *Manda dehaiyi*) or *bhiri zidqa* (“chosen of righteousness”), are known in the history of religions as a Gnostic-Jewish baptismal community which, because of the historical traumas endured during the Roman-Jewish War (66-70 CE), was forced to self-exile from Syria-Palestine to *Tura deMadai* or “the region of the hills of Media”, between Harran and Nisibis, during the reign of the last Arsacids (1st-2nd centuries CE). Another writing of the sect, the *Harran Gawaita* (the “Inner Harran”), mentions John the Baptist as a Mandaean prophet and a “messenger from the Emperor of Light”. The Mandaeans survive into the 21st century, in the South of Iran and the South of Iraq. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 343-366.

Emperor of Light will bring into being the “Messenger of Light”, named *Manda deHaiyi* or the “*Gnosis* of Life”. The Mandaean soteriology is focused on the ascent of the human souls, treasurers of the fallen light, from the “Dark Place” (*Ogdoad*) to the “Place of Light” (*Pleroma*). On the Judgment Day, all the Powers of Darkness will be destroyed, “the Light will ascend and the Darkness will return to its rightful place”³². The writing entitled *Pistis Sophia* (*Belief – Wisdom*)³³ describes the encounter between Jesus and *Sophia*, under the thirteenth eon, and Jesus’ act of salvation which accomplishes the ascent of *Sophia* into the *Pleroma* and reestablishes the celestial harmony. The celestial space is governed by the theocratic order of “the Unnamed God”, under which lies the “treasure of Light” governed by “the Father of the treasure of Light”. The “Great and Unseen *Propator*” lives along with *Barbelo* in the *kerasmos* or “the world where the Sun sets”. Under this world lie the twelve eons, separated from the world by the sphere *heimarmene*, “destiny”. Through his parables, Jesus points out the “man of Light” hidden within each of his disciples. In the second treatise, Jesus teaches them about the “Archons of destiny” and the tortures that these Archons inflict upon the souls that wish to reach the “treasure of Light” after death. Jesus counters these malefic powers by invoking the sacraments that are able to purify the human souls from sins, first and foremost “the baptizing with water”³⁴. In *Pistis Sophia* are included five odes from the *Odes of Solomon*³⁵, a collection of Gnostic hymns that emphasize the interdependence between knowledge and salvation³⁶. *The*

³² *Ginza Rabba* in Warner Forester (ed.), Robert McLachlan Wilson (trans.), *Gnosis. A selection of Gnostic texts*, I-II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947, II, p. 156, pp.163-165, pp. 170-179, pp. 187-192: “When the Great Fruit was within the Great Fruit, the Emperor of Light came into being. From the Great and Glorious Emperor of Light, the Great ether of brilliance came into being. From the Great Ether, the Living Fire came into being. (...) The Great Jordan came into being, and with it the Water of Life. The brilliant, sparkling water was born and so I, Life, came into being. I, Life, was brought into being and all of the *uthri* came to being. (...) I looked at the war chariots of the Sons of Darkness (...). I watched the evil rebels mounted on their chariots. (...) They are armed with weapons of great evil and make plans against the Place of the Light. (...) Goodness prevails over the evil of the Evil Place. Kindness prevails over the bitterness of the Evil Place. The Living Fire prevails over the devouring flames of the Evil Place. (...) When they (the evil powers) arrived on the Earth (*Tibil*) and touched *Adam*’s body, when *Ptahil* wanted to throw life inside the body, I (*Manda deHaiyi*) have taken it up from his grasp. When *Ptahil* raised *Adam*, I (*Manda deHaiyi*) am the one that raised his bones. When *Ptahil* put his hand over him (*Adam*), I (*Manda deHaiyi*) am the one who made him breath the breath of Life. (...) In order that he (the Emperor of Light) may take *Adam* to the Place of the Light, along with his father, *Adakas-Ziwa*, and turn him into an *uthra* of the Place of the Light.”

³³ *Codex Aschewianus* contains two Gnostic-Christian Coptic writings, known as the *Pistis Sophia*, both written in Egypt. The first is dated towards 250-300 CE and the second is dated towards 300-350 CE.

³⁴ *Pistis Sophia*, in Henneke, Scheemelcher, McLachlan Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, pp. 361-369: “(...) that’s when the skies had opened (...) and they saw Jesus descending, shining with bright light and the Light that surrounded Him was overwhelming. (...) Then Jesus gathered the splendor of this light inside His body and all of his disciples were encouraged to stand in His presence and worship Him, rejoicing with great enthusiasm. (...) But after He said these things, Jesus added: Oh, Father of Infinite Paternity, hear Me for the sake of My disciples which I brought before You, so that they will believe Your words of truth, grant them all that I asked of You, for I know the Name of the Father that holds the treasure of Light”

³⁵ *The Odes of Solomon* is a collection of Gnostic Jewish-Christian hymns, a pseudo-epigraphical writing preserved in Syriac and Greek versions, dated in Syria-Palestine in the 1st-2nd centuries CE.

³⁶ *The Odes of Solomon*, in Barnstone. *The Other Bible*, pp. 267-285. *Ode no. 7*: “The Father of Knowledge is the Word of Knowledge. The Creator of wisdom is wiser than its works (...). (...) His way is knowledge. He expanded it and made it complete. And above it are the signs of His Light, from the beginning to the end. He rested in His Son, He was satisfied with His Son, and due to his salvation, the Lord had taken possession of all things. (...) Hatred

Hypostasis of the Archons or *The Reality of the Archons*³⁷ rewrites the Biblical myth of the creation of Adam from a Gnostic perspective, by inverting the relation between good and evil. Led by Yaldabaoth, the Archons will have the initiative to create the Primordial Man out of the “dust from the earth”. Above the limits of the Evil Demiurge’s powers, the “Father of the Whole” will breath the life into Adam’s face and will endow him with a soul, while the Spirit descended from the “Land of Diamond” will take shelter within his being. The Archons place Adam into the “garden” and forbid him to eat from the “tree of the recognizance of good and evil”. Eve is made from the rib of the slumbering Adam by the hands of the Archons who will later violate a “resemblance” of Eve. Metamorphosed into a snake, the Spirit will advise Adam and Eve to eat from the “tree of the recognizance of good and evil”, in order to revolt against the dictatorship that Yaldabaoth and the Archons had instituted within both the cosmos and the paradisiacal space. Sophia inserts the Light inside the realm of chaos and matter, created by Yaldabaoth. Zoe (“Life”) and Pistis Sophia will defeat Yaldabaoth, will throw him in the Tartaros and will remind Adam that his origin resides in the “Primordial Father”, in the “Everlasting Light”³⁸. *The Gospel of Truth*³⁹ states that the only way to accede to the knowledge of the “Father of Truth” is “the Word that came forth of the Pleroma”. “Forgetfulness”, which is the cause of the non-knowledge the Father, can only be destroyed through the “knowledge of the Father”, preached by Jesus Christ, the Father’s “hidden mystery”, who came and was crucified for the “enlightenment of those who live in darkness”. A human being endowed with *gnosis* is a being whose name was spoken by the Father. To possess the knowledge means to be “called” from “on high”, to accomplish the will of the One who “calls”, to ascend toward Him and find celestial “peace”. The man who was awakened through knowledge knows “where he came from and where he is going”. This is the “knowledge of the Book of Life” that the Father has revealed to the eons, a book written in the “Letters of the Truth”, by the Unity of the Father. The Word reveals the Spirit and the Son, “in the bosom of the Father”, and the “truth” is in the “mouth of the Father”, the Spirit being His “tongue”. The cosmic spaces take “shape” from the knowledge of the Father, who is similar to the “dawn” for those who have been awakened from ignorance. The Father bestows on the human beings the “ways of knowing the knowledge of the Father and the revelation of His Son” and destroys the Powers of Darkness with the “Power of Knowledge”. The Father’s mouth utters Light, Life and Salvation, which the Spirit brings from the Infinite of

will perish from the world, envy will wither, ignorance will be abolished, for the knowledge of the Lord has come. (...) Let there be nothing without life, knowledge or language, for the Lord gave as a gift to His creation a mouth” *The Ode no. 41*: “The Father of Truth has remembered Me. (...) The Savior makes us feel alive and doesn’t forget our souls. (...) The Son of the Almighty appeared in the perfection of the Father. The Light has found its rise within the Word that earlier belonged to It. There is only one Messiah, known since before the dawning of the world. He saves the souls in His Name and Truth.” Also Rendel Harris, Alphonse Mingana (ed.), *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, I-II*, London: Longman, 1920.

³⁷ *The Hypostasis of the Archons* is a Christian-Gnostic text, written in Coptic after a Greek *Vorlage*, dated in the 3rd century CE, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*.

³⁸ *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, II, 4, 86, 25 – 97, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 162-169: “You and your seed altogether, are born from the Primordial Father, from above, from the Eternal Light, whence your souls came.”

³⁹ *The Gospel of Truth* is a Christian-Gnostic writing, inspired by the Valentinian Gnostic theology, written in Coptic after a Greek *Vorlage*, dated between 140-180 CE, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*.

the Father and the “sons of the inner knowledge” will speak, in their turn, from “the day from on high which has no night” and from the “light that is never submerged, because of its perfection”. The Word of the *Gospel* that unveils “the warm *Pleroma* of love” penetrates inside the souls of the human beings who await for the “salvation from above” and the faith changes their “division” into “unity”. The Father knows the “beginning and the end” of the human beings, whose “end” is the “knowledge of the Father”. All of the Father’s emanations are “*Pleromas*”, including the human souls, and the *Pleroma* is “His only resting place”. The human beings that have found *Gnosis* won’t cross the threshold of death, they will “rest within the One that rests”, the Father is within them and they are within the Father, they identified themselves to the truth and they will exist into the “eternal life” and the “perfect light”⁴⁰.

The attempt to solve the system of the hermeneutical equations uncovered by the Gnosticism inside the field of the history of the religious ideas justifies the approach which defines the Gnostic spiritual universe as a syncretistic religious space, constituted at the confluence of the Egyptian religious space, the Biblical-Evangelical religious space and the Zoroastrian-Zurvanite religious space, against the background of the Hellenistic religious space⁴¹. The harmonization of the resemblances and differences which are characteristic to the multiple identities of these religious spaces throws into relief the Gnosticism’s creativity, dynamics and power of synthesis in the evolution of the history of religions.

From the perspective of the history of the religious ideas, numerous elements inserted in the Gnostic religious imagination have their origin in the Egyptian religious imagination. This fact is not surprising by all means, since the Gnostic sects located in the region of Hellenistic Alexandria were recruiting a fair number of followers from the social milieu of the Coptic population, the direct descendants of the Egyptians that lived during the period of the Pharaohs. Hypothetically speaking, we can assume that the ancient spiritual deposit consisting of archaic ideas and mythological narratives enjoyed a long vitality, survived throughout the ages, starting with the First Dynasty and lasting until the Thirty-first Persian Dynasty (approximately from 2925 BCE to 232 CE), and remained latent during the Greek-Roman period, when it also opened its treasure of religious thinking towards the multiple rewritings and forging of new meanings, accomplished from the Gnostic syncretistic perspective. For example the fabulous time of the beginning, the time of the creation purified of evil, between the manifestation of the Creator above the Primordial Waters, and Horus’ ascent to the throne, is named *Tep zepi* (“the First Time”). What follows is the Golden Age of absolute perfection, referred to as “the Age of Râ” or “the age of *Osiris* and *Horus*”⁴². The ancient cosmogonical myths describe the establishing of the Center of the World through the symbolism of the conception of the reality of the shape out of the chaotic shapeless reality: the emergence of the “Primordial Hill” from the “Primordial Waters”; the birth of the “Primordial Egg”, which contains the “Bird of Light”; the coming into being of the “Lotus of Origin” that bears within itself the “infant Sun”. In this context, the God *Atum* is hypostasized in the shape of a Snake in both the chaotic pre-cosmogonical state of the

⁴⁰ *The Gospel of Truth* I, 3, and XII, 2, 16, 35 – 43, 20 in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 38-51: “And blessed is He who gave sight to blind men.”

⁴¹ Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 275-294; Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 10-52; Henri-Charles Puech, *En quête de la Gnose*, I-II, Paris: Gallimard, 1978.

⁴² Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp. 250-285.

Universe, and the post-cosmic state, when the Universe will regress to its chaotic state. It is plausible that the Snake-*Atum* is situated in the position of a religious archetype in relation to the Snake-*Ouroboros* and the Gnostic theology of the Ophites. At the level of the archaic Egyptian cosmogony, *Atum* is designated as the Supreme occult God, while *Râ*, the Sun, has the attributes of the manifested God. The *Râ-Atum-Khepri*⁴³ triad creates the divine couple *Shu-Tephnut*, the parents of the *Geb-Nut* couple (the Earth and the Sky), out of which emanate the couples of *Osiris-Isis* and *Seth-Nephthys*. These divine couples will be recalled in the Gnostic religious space by the *syzygy*-es or “pairs” of eons. The notion of the “*Ogdoad*” (according to Mircea Eliade) as well originates in the religious milieu of the city of Hermopolis, located in Middle Egypt, where it designated a group of eight gods, to which *Ptah* was added. *Ptah* was also worshiped in Memphis, the capital city of the Pharaohs of the First Dynasty, as the Supreme God who possessed the power to create through his “heart” and “tongue”, whilst *Atum* was only venerated as the author of the first divine couple. The orgiastic incident found in some of the Gnostic writings seems to be foretold by *Atum*’s action of reproducing his substance through the creation of the divine couples out of his spit or sperm, as a consequence of masturbation. Mircea Eliade noticed that “the theogony and the cosmogony are accomplished through the creative power which resides in the thought and speech of a single God”. Subsequent to this, the human being (*erme*) is born from the tears (*erme*) of the solar god *Râ*, the “fascicle of light”⁴⁴. The light does not only serve as a means to the self-revelation of the God (*deus revelatus*), but also to His self-concealing (*deus absconditus*). The concealing of the divine light is hypostasized in the shape of an eagle, which symbolize the eyes of the Celestial Gods (the Eye of the Sun, the Eye of the Moon). The golden color epitomizes the human sensibility towards the light and the capacity of the human eyes to perceive the light: the sunlight determines the power of the human beings to see the world and to move between its spaces. The trialectical positive concept of Light – capacity to see – Life stands in opposition to the trialectical negative concept of Darkness – blindness – the threatening of the Principle of Life by the fading away of the gods. Due to His daily brilliance, The God of Light sustains the continuous existence of creation⁴⁵. The vessel in which the Solar God crosses the Primordial Waters glitters, irradiates light, and the deceased Pharaoh along with the human beings that have crossed the threshold of death aspire to melt away in the God’s luminous body, in order to reach the ultimate goal of becoming consubstantial with the God⁴⁶.

The Biblical narratives (*Aggadoth*)⁴⁷ concerning the creation of the Universe (*olam*) and the creation of Man (*Adam*) by the Living God (*Elohyim hayyim*) are vested with a paradigmatic

⁴³ The Sun at the zenith – the Sun at sunset – the Sun at sunrise.

⁴⁴ S. Sauneron, J. Yoyote, “La Naissance du monde selon l’Egypte ancienne”, in *La Naissance du Monde* (ed. Collective), Paris: Seuil, 1959, pp. 19-91. S. Morenz, *La Religion égyptienne*, Paris: Payot, 1962, pp. 229-245. James B. Pritchard (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969. R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Oxford: Sandpiper, 1998, pp. 17-127. Mircea Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, I-III, Paris: Payot, 1975-1983, I, pp. 70-107.

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Helck, Wolfgang Westendorf (ed.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, III, 1980, pp. 1033-1034.

⁴⁶ Erik Hornung, *Les Dieux de l’Egypte. Le Un et le Multiple*, Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1986, p. 120.

⁴⁷ *Genesis*, 1, 1 – 3, 24, *The Bible or the Holy Scripture*, Bucharest: The Publishing House of the Biblical Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1988, pp. 11-14.

value not only in the Abrahamic religious spaces, but in the Gnostic religious space as well. Through the succession of the theocratic actions accomplished by the Supreme, Primordial and Infinite Divinity, the cosmogonic work is achieved, and the Light is separated from the Darkness⁴⁸. Although the Biblical Text does not elucidate the origin of evil, the Principle of Evil is present in the paradisiacal space, triply hypostasized as the snake, the knowledge of evil, situated in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and also as a certain rational-psychological reality, inserted in the composition of *Adam's* being in the shape of a mysterious anthropogonical attachment, ontological and gnoseological alike, susceptible to trigger the fall of the human beings into sinfulness or to impeach the manifestation of the absolute resistance of the human beings against the temptation of evil. The theocratical condemnation institutes the "curse of the snake", the exile of the Adamic beings beyond the limits of Paradise and their immersion in the strange space of the perishable life, but it doesn't abolish the presence of the Evil Principle inside the space of creation. This malefic secondary presence will accompany all along the Biblical and the Evangelical history⁴⁹, it will always stand as an unseen force that needs to be continuously vanquished by the monarchical, prophetic and messianic hypostasis of the Divine Power, before the historical realization of the ideal of salvation, of the apocalyptical ideal focused on the descent of the Celestial Jerusalem, on the theocratical fashioning of the New Sky and the New Earth. The *Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah*, 12 a, recalls the making of the "ten things" in the first day of Creation: the sky and the earth, the non-form and the chaos, the light and the darkness, the divine breath and the water, the length of the day and the length of the night. In the *baraita* it is mentioned that the non-form is "the green circle that surrounds the entire world", out of which the waves of Darkness flow upon the world, and also that the chaos originates in the "polished rocks that are lying at the bottom of the Abyss", a place wherefrom the waters pour within the precincts of the Universe⁵⁰. Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Jacob considered that the light that God created in the first day of the hebdomad of Creation was so powerful, that *Adam* could contemplate the whole world, from beginning to end. But God decided to conceal this light from the generation of the Flood and from the generation of the Tower of Babel, so that He could bestow it on the righteous ones, in the world to come, because the word *tov*, "good", expresses concomitantly the fact that the light is good⁵¹ and the fact that the righteous human

⁴⁸ *Genesis*, 1, 1 – 1, 5, *The Bible*, p. 11: "In the beginning, God created the sky and the earth. (...) And so He spoke: Let there be light! And there was light. Then God contemplated the goodness of the light and has separated it from the darkness."

⁴⁹ For example, *Genesis*, 4, 2-16 (Abel and Cain); *Genesis*, 6, 1-5 (the fall of the angels into sinfulness, the birth of the giants, the wickedness of the human beings); *Genesis*, 11, 1-9 (the Tower of Babel); *Genesis*, 19, 1-29 (Sodom and Gomorrah); *Exodus*, 32, 1-35 (the golden calf); *III Kings*, 16, 1-34 (the four kings of Israel); *III Kings*, 18, 13 and *Nehemiah*, 9, 26 (the killing of God's prophets); *III Kings*, 21, 1-29 (Ahab and Jezebel); *Job*, 1, 6-12 (the temptation of Job); *Job*, 41, 1-34 (the Leviathan); *Matthew*, 4, 1-11 (the temptation of Jesus); *The Apocalypse of John*, 12, 1 – 13, 18 (the monster, the beast). *The Bible*, pp. 14-15, p. 16, pp. 20-21, pp. 28-29, pp. 103-105, pp. 384-385, p. 387, pp. 391-392, p. 517, p. 534, pp. 563-564, pp. 1099-1100, pp. 1403-1404.

⁵⁰ *Talmud Bavli, Hagigah*, 12 a, Isidore Epstein (trans.), *The Babylonian Talmud*, London: Soncino Press, 1936-1952. Also *Mishnah, Taanit*, 4: 3, A-O, Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Mishnah / The Mishnah*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 314.

⁵¹ *Genesis* 1, 3-4, *The Bible*, p. 11.

beings are good⁵² in the eyes of the Lord⁵³. The relationship between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil, in the Written Law (*torah shebe'ktav*) and in the Oral Law (*torah shebe'alpe*), represents the adequate exegetical background for the understanding of the "Teaching about the Two Spirits", included in the *Community Rule* or *IQS*⁵⁴, III, 13 – IV, 26, as well as in the *War Rule* or *IQM*, *4QM*⁵⁵, two writings from the category of the *Serakhim* or *Rules*, contained in the corpus of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*⁵⁶. The "Teaching about the Two Spirits" states that God created from the beginning the whole world according to the principle of a perfect equilibrium between the parts of Light and the parts of Darkness. This cosmogonic principle, on which the balance and the dynamics of nature is founded, is at the same time an anthropological and antropogonical principle: the human beings define themselves according to their affiliation to the Light or to the Darkness, by the submission of their souls, bodies and spirits to the rule of the "Prince of Light" or to the rule of the "Angel of Darkness". The *Horoscopes* (4Q186, 4QMessAr) discovered at Khirbet Qumran established how many out of the nine parts which constituted each and every Adamic being belonged to the Light and how many of them belonged to the Darkness, according to a scale of humanity which had at its positive end the most righteous man (eight parts of Light and one part of Darkness) and at its negative end the most sinful man (eight parts of Darkness and one part Light). In the apocalyptic perspective, the theocratic will of the "God of Knowledge" will destroy for ever all the parts of darkness, evil, deception, and will establish a Kingdom of Light, Good and Truth⁵⁷. The *War Rule* contains a

⁵² *Isaia*, 3, 10, *The Bible*, p. 679.

⁵³ *Talmud Bavli*, *Hagigah*, 12 a, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*. Also, *Talmud Bavli*, *Yoma*, 38 b, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*. *Talmud Bavli*, *Baba Kamma*, 55 a, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*, where it is reminded that the letter *teth* is a fortunate letter, because it is used for the first time in the Biblical Text in *Genesis*, 1, 4, in order to express the fact that the world is good, *tov*.

⁵⁴ The *Community Rule* is one of the texts that define the spirituality of the Qumran Community. It was discovered in the 1st Cave from Khirbet Qumran, and it is dated in the 1st century BCE.

⁵⁵ The *War Rule* describes the apocalyptic war between the "Sons of Light" and the "Sons of Darkness". The text was discovered in the 1st Cave and in the 4th Cave from Khirbet Qumran and it is dated between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE.

⁵⁶ The *Dead Sea Scrolls* were discovered between 1947-1956, inside the eleven Caves from Khirbet Qumran, in the Judaean Desert, on the Dead Sea shore. Out of a total of approximately one thousand documents, the great majority of them are preserved only in a fragmentary state. Only nine of the parchment scrolls have intact at least half of their initial surface. These documents are classified in four categories: proto-Masoretic biblical texts, proto-Septuagintic biblical texts, qumranite texts, unclassified texts. The *Dead Sea Scrolls* are dated between the historical interval comprised between the 3rd century BCE and 1st century CE. The Community of Khirbet Qumran was destroyed in the year 68 CE by the Roman troops that had conquered Jericho. Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company & Leiden / New York / Köln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1998, pp. 1-11. Also, Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 100-117.

⁵⁷ The *Community Rule* or *IQS*, III, 13 – IV, 26, in Geza Vermes (ed., trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 64-67: "From the God of Knowledge comes all that there is and all that will be. (...) He has created man to rule the world and has appointed two Spirits for him, unto whom he will walk until the day of His judgment: the Spirits of Falsehood and Truth. Those who are born from Truth spring from the fountain of Light and those who are born from Falsehood spring from a fountain of Darkness. All the children of justice are led by the Prince of Light and follow the way of the Light, while all the children of Falsehood are led by the Angel of Darkness and follow the way of the Darkness. But the God of Israel and the Angel of His Righteousness will save

detailed description of the apocalyptic battle to be waged between the “Sons of Light” and the “Sons of Darkness” (*kittim*, the “Caldaeans”), the martial development of which will take place concomitantly in the celestial and terrestrial spaces. God Himself will lead the legions of the “Sons of Light”, in a battle where the righteous men will fight alongside with the angels, under the command of the Priests and Levites, of the Great Priest (*Kohen Gadol*) and the “Prince of the Congregation”. 4Q285 identifies the “Prince of the Congregation” with the Messiah, the Son of David, the Monarchical Anointed One⁵⁸. In concordance with the biblical concept of the “Holy War”⁵⁹, the sounds issued from the priests’ trumpets will cause the defending walls of the Citadel of Evil to collapse and will sing the praise for the final triumph of the army of the “Sons of Light”⁶⁰. André Dupont-Sommer⁶¹, Karl Georg Kuhn⁶² and Marc Philonenko⁶³ have asserted

all the Sons of Light. (...) But in the mysteries of His understanding and in His glorious wisdom, God has decreed an end to Falsehood, and in the day of His judgment, He will destroy it forever. Then the Truth, that has trodden the ways of wickedness during the time when Falsehood reigned, until the appointed time of the judgment, will rise in the world forever.” Also, Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, pp. 108-110.

⁵⁸ *Isaiah*, 10, 34 – 11, 1.

⁵⁹ *Joshua*, 6, 1 – 12, 24; *Judges*, 6, 1 – 12, 15; *Daniel*, 11, 40 – 12, 3.

⁶⁰ The *War Rule* or 1QM, I – XIX, 4QM, 4Q285, 4Q491, 4Q493, in Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, pp. 101- 127: “(...) then, when the exiled Sons of Light return from the Desert of the Nations, in order to settle their camp in the Desert of Jerusalem, and after the battle they will ascend from there. (...) This will be a time of salvation for the people of God, an age of supremacy for all the members of His camp and an age of eternal destruction for all those that have a part in the camp of *Satan*. (...) There will be no escape for the Sons of Darkness. The Sons of Justice will shine over the whole earth. They will continue to shine until all the seasons of Darkness will be destroyed, and in the season appointed by God, His praised Greatness will shine eternally in the peace, blessing, glory, joy and long life of the Sons of Light. When the *kittim* will fall, there will be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that will be the day appointed since the old times for the battle aiming at the destruction of the Sons of Darkness. Then the congregation of the *elim* and the troops of men will fight, they will cause a great bloodshed to happen. In the day of the disaster, the Sons of Light will fight with the congregation of darkness amidst the screaming of a great crowd, and the voices of the angels (*elim*) will be intertwined with the voices of men, in order to manifest the Power of God. (...) By the hand of your Anointed One, who has understood Your testimonies, You have revealed to us the time and the place of the battles fought by Your hands, in order that You may praise Yourself within our enemies, through the annihilation of the armies of *Satan*. (...) You have created us for Yourself, Oh, Lord, so that we can be an eternal people. You have decreed for us a destiny of Light, according to Your Truth. And the Prince of Light You have chosen even since ancient times, so that he could come to our rescue. All the Sons of Righteousness are in his hand and all the Spirits of Truth are at his command. But *Satan*, the Angel of evil-doing, You have created him for the abyss. His law is within the Darkness and his purpose is to work evil and injustice. All the spirits that have a part in his congregation, the angels of destruction, walk according to the Precepts of Darkness. (...) Because You have appointed the day of the battle even since the ancient ages, in order to rescue the truth and destroy the injustice, to reduce the Darkness to nothingness and to praise the Light (...) and destroy the Sons of Darkness. (...) The priests, the sons of Aaron, will stay in front of the battle formations and will sound the trumpets of Recollection. After this, they will open the gates for the infantry.” Also, Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, pp. 102-104.

⁶¹ André Dupont-Sommer, “L’Instruction sur les deux Esprits dans le *Manuel de Discipline*”, in *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 142, 1952, pp. 5-35.

⁶² Karl Georg Kuhn, “Die Sektenschrift und die iranische Religion”, in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 49, 1952, pp. 296-316.

⁶³ Marc Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrânienne des deux Esprits: ses origines iraniennes et ses prolongements dans le judaïsme essénien et le christianisme antique”, in Geo Widengren, Anders Hultgård, Marc Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne et dualisme qoumrânien*, Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1995, pp. 163-211.

that the “Teaching about the Two Spirits” throws into relief an Iranian influence inside the Qumranite space. The myth of the twin and antagonistic Spirits plays a fundamental role in the religious thinking of Zoroastrianism (approximately 628 – 551 BCE) and Zurvanism (approximately 550 – 330 BCE). In *Zend-Avesta*, *Yasna*, 47, 3, it is mentioned that *Ahura Mazdā*, the Supreme God, is the Father of the twin Spirits, the Spirit of Good, *Spenta Mainyu*, and the Spirit of Evil, *Ahura Mainyu*. *Yasna*, 30, 3, states that “originally out of the Two Spirits that were known (...) as twins, one is the perfect Good and the other is the Evil”. The “intelligent” people choose the “Good”, while the “foolish” people choose the “Evil”. *Yasna*, 45, 2, refers to the primordial dialogue between the “Two Spirits”, where “the holly” Spirit addressed the “destructive” Spirit in the following manner: “neither our thoughts, nor our doctrines, nor our mental strengths, nor our choices, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our consciousnesses, nor our souls agree”⁶⁴. *Yasna Haptahāti* associates *Ahura Mazdā* with the Light⁶⁵. The Zurvanite theology, which was already constituted in the period of the Achaemenids, will substitute *Zurvan* for *Ahura Mazdā*, who will be identified with the Spirit of Good. In the period of the Sassanids (224 / 226 – 651 CE), characterized by a syncretistic intertwining of Mazdeism and Zurvanism, the doctrine of the “Two Principles” was completed with the doctrine of the “Three Times”, accepted later on by the Manichaeism as well: *bundahišn*, the “primordial creation”; *gumēčišn*, the “mixture”; *vičarišn*, the “separation”⁶⁶. The Zurvanite doctrine postulates that from the bosom of *Zurvan* emerge the Two Spirits, the Spirit of Evil, *Ahriman*, and the Spirit of Good, *Ohrmazd*. *Ohrmazd* will generate a “good and righteous” creation, while *Ahriman* will bring into being an “evil and dishonest” creation. *Ohrmazd* and *Ahriman* polarize the fundamental antithesis: Light-Darkness, Truth-Falsehood, Perfume-Stench⁶⁷.

Anders Hultgård has asserted that the theology of history, from the religious perspective of Zoroastrianism, presupposes the preexistence of the cosmic dualism. The historical-temporal continuity is determined by the theocratic necessity of a mythological beginning and a mythological end, by a divine plan the purpose of which is the everlasting destruction of the Principle of Evil. The divine act that brings the creation into being envisages the liberation and restoration of the Light that has fallen into the Darkness, and this is the reason why, in Zoroastrian mythology and theology, the cosmogony and the eschatology are intertwined⁶⁸. The balanced and autarchic coexistence, in eternity, of *Ohrmazd* (the Principle of Light and Good) and *Ahriman* (the Principle of Darkness and Evil) is interrupted by the omniscient prediction of *Ohrmazd* concerning *Ahriman*’s attack against the Kingdom of Light. In order to counter this attack even before it was conceived by the Evil Principle, *Ohrmazd* began the work of creation by fashioning the beings in a spiritual state, *mēnōk*. Fascinated by the contemplation of a beam

⁶⁴ J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre. Etude critique avec une traduction commentée des Gāthā*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1948, pp. 227-253.

⁶⁵ Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrânienne”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp. 171.

⁶⁶ H. S. Nyberg, “Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes”, I-II, in *Journal asiatique*, 214, pp. 193-310, 219, pp. 1-134, 1929-1931. Also, Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965.

⁶⁷ Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrânienne”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, p. 173.

⁶⁸ Anders Hultgård, “Mythe et histoire dans l’Iran ancien. Etude de quelques thèmes dans le *Bahman Yašt*”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp.81-85.

of Light, *Ahriman* suspends his movement into the Realm of Darkness, and animated by concupiscence, he will ascend towards the brilliant abode of the Supreme Divinity. *Ohrmazd* will step forward, in order to meet him, and will banish him back to Darkness. *Ahriman* fashions a

counter-creation and, after an interval of three thousand years, will threaten once more the creation of *Ohrmazd* and the Kingdom of Light. The War between Light and Darkness, circumscribed by a laps of time of nine thousand years, will start with *Ohrmazd*'s incantation of the prayer *ahunvar*, a prayer that celebrates the final defeat of *Ahriman*. During the next laps of time of three thousand years, *Ohrmazd* will continue the *mēnōk* state of creation through the *gētik*, a material state, which also includes the Primordial Man, *Gayōmart*. As a consequence of a new attack, *Ahriman* and his demonic armies will penetrate inside *Ohrmazd*'s creation and will defile it. Nevertheless, they will soon discover that their lodging inside the creation is, in reality, an imprisonment, decreed by the theocratic will of *Ohrmazd*. Having no way out, and no way to gain the upper hand, *Ahriman* has no choice but to fight until his own annihilation, inside the creation that he himself had transformed into a mixture (*gumēčīšn*) of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, a mixture that will be metamorphosed into pure Light after the apocalyptic triumph of *Ohrmazd* over *Ahriman* and the eternal separation of the Kingdom of Light from the Kingdom of Darkness. This cosmogonical-antropologic Zoroastrian myth is included in two middle-Iranian texts, written in *pehlevi*, the *Bundahišn*, I, 1-59, I A, 1-21, IV, 1-28 and *Selections from Zātspram*, I, 1-27⁶⁹, both of them founded on the treatises of the *Zend-Avesta*: *Yasna*, 44, 3-5, where *Ahura Mazdā* is described as the Father and Creator of the cosmos; *Yāšt*, 13, 2 – 3, 9 – 10, where the spiritual beings (*fravaši*) that have assisted *Ahura Mazdā* in accomplishing the work of creation are mentioned; *Vidēvdāt*, 2, 4 – 19, where *Ahura Mazdā*, the initial Creator of the cosmos, entrusts *Yima* with the task of continuing the works of creation, through an act of enlargement in three levels of the terrestrial space⁷⁰.

In the religious syncretistic environment of the Hellenistic period (Keronea, 338 BCE – Kinoskefalai, 197 BCE), especially in Egypt and in Syria-Palestine, the Gnostic sects coexist with the mystery sects, the liturgical ceremonies of which were focused on divinities endowed with the mythological identity of having preserved their living principle while passing through the consecutive experiences of death and resurrection. This ritualistic system was suitable to confer upon the communities founded on the relationship between the *myst* and the *mystagoge* the religious aim or privilege of the individual redemption. The Gnostic theological nomenclature will be built on a Greek linguistic structure: *Propator*, *Demiourgos*, *aiōn*, *Archontes*, *syzygia*, *Pleroma*, *Sophia*, *Ogdoas*, *Nous*, *Anthropos*, *Epinoia*, *Pronoia* etc., later on translated or transferred into Latin, Coptic, Hebrew, Syriac, Mandaean, Persian, Arabic, Slavonic. For example, the Hellenistic mysteries of *Isis and Serapis* (*Osiris – Apis*), founded on a

⁶⁹ Apocalyptic post-Sassanid compilations, written in *pehlevi* between the 7th and 9th centuries CE, based on Avestic textual sources and Zoroastrian traditions attested even since the 4th century AD, a period when the the composition of the *Zend-Avesta* has come to a close.

⁷⁰ Hultgård, "Mythe et histoire dans l'Iran ancien", in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp. 69-85. H.S. Nyberg, "Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes", I-II, in *Journal asiatique*, 214, pp. 193-310, 219, pp. 1-134, 1929-1931. Also, R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

theological and cultic system established by the Egyptian priest Manethon and the Greek Timotheos, a descendant of the clan of the Eumolpids from Eleusis, during the reign of Ptolemaeus Soter (304-284 BCE), prove the religious dynamics and the millenary vitality of the archaic myth of *Osiris – Isis – Horus*, its multiple potentialities and its openness towards successive rewritings and elaborations. In the same context, the analytical approach that investigates the appearance of the Gnostic sects and systems of thinking must throw into relief the mutual relationship between the Gnostic spiritual treasure and the *Revelation of Hermes Trismegistus* – “Hermes the thrice Great”, a divine alter-ego of the Egyptian god *Thoth*, the god of the Moon, the patron of the scribes’ guild and of the art of writing, symbolized by the ibis and the baboon, having the cultic headquarters located in the city of Hermopolis –, a collection of texts indited between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE. André-Jean Festugière and Mircea Eliade underlined the difference between the popular hermetism (astrology, magic, occult sciences, alchemy) and the philosophical hermetism (the seventeen treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum*), and emphasized that in the Hellenistic period *Thoth – Hermes* was worshipped as the patron of all the sciences, as the inventor of the hieroglyphs and as a revered magician, while the Stoics identified him with the *Logos*. Paramount for the exegesis of the hermetical literature is the complementarity of the positive theology and the negative theology, included in the *Corpus Hermeticum*: the first one postulates the existence of a cosmos permeated by the presence of divinity, because the “Great God” or the “Unseen God”, simultaneously the “One”, the “Whole” and the “Father”, manifests Himself through the world, and Man occupies the third place in the triad, after the Primordial God and the Cosmos (*Corpus Hermeticum*, V, 2 and XII, 22); the second one asserts the dualism of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, and considers that the matter and the world represent the “totality of Evil”, that the Primordial God is “hidden in the mystery of His own Being” and the creation is defined as a process of descendant ontological emanation, along the vertical axis *Nous* (the androgynous Superior Intellect) – *Demiourgos* (the Creator of the world) – *Anthropos* (the Celestial Man who is intertwined by sexual intercourse to *Physis*, “Nature”) – the bodily man (upon whom *Anthropos* descends, hypostasized as soul and spiritual light). The human beings can save themselves only through the acquiring of “knowledge” (*Gnosis*), which enables the bodily man, who is mortal and immortal alike, to “become a god”, through the acknowledgement of his status as a “stranger” in the mundane space and through the re-absorption of his soul and spirit within the substance of the Primordial Divinity (*Corpus Hermeticum*, I, *Poimandres*; also VI, 4 and XIII, 1-7). The dualism, the conception of the divine emanation and the principle of the saving knowledge prove the connection between the Hermetic literature and the Gnostic literature. Within the framework of this syncretistic perspective over the hermetism and the gnosticism, it is outstanding to single out the repeated occurrence of the words *Hermes* and *Trismegistus* in a treatise included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*, *The Discourse about the eighth and the ninth*, where the “Unseen God” provides theocratic assistance to the ascent of the *myst* and the *mystagog* through the *Ogdoad*, to the 9th heaven⁷¹. The genealogy of some of the Gnostic ideas and practices concerning the religious initiation

⁷¹ *The Discourse about the eighth and the ninth*, VI, 6, 56, 15 – 63, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 324-326.

indicate, inside the Hellenic-Hellenistic space (6th century BCE – 3rd century CE), the Orphic spiritual milieu, the Orphic texts and doctrines. A number of versions of the cosmogonical myth describe the creation of the Primordial Egg by the will of *Chronos*, in the *Aither*, and the fashioning of *Eros*, the principle of birth, which bring *Zeus* and the other gods into being, as well as the cosmos; or the emanation of the primordial couple *Uranus* – *Gaia* from *Nyx*, the “night”, the primordial reality; or the ontological propagation along the structure constituted by *Okeanos* – *Chronos* – *Aither* – *Chaos*; or the multiplication of the One through the primordial conflict, which separates the Earth from the Waters and the Sky. The anthropogony included in the religious thinking of later Orphism will identify the origin of Man within the ashes of the Titans, which is stigmatized by the primordial sin. Nevertheless, in a paradoxical manner the substance of the Titans bears in its very essence the divine substance of the child *Dionysos*, annihilated and revived through fire. This Orphic-Dyonisiac symbolism will become paradigmatic for the later Gnostic theology, which will identify the presence of the fallen Light from the Primordial Divinity inside Adam’s body, fashioned by the Archons, and will organize the entire scenario of the salvation through knowledge around the return of the fallen Light to the Kingdom of Light. The liberation from the theogonical negativity implied the accomplishment of the acts of purification (*katharsis*, *katharmoi*) and rituals of initiation (*teletai*)⁷².

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, a myth is constituted of the entire ensemble of its versions⁷³. The essential elements of the great Myth of Light and Darkness, accompanied by an impressive number of variations and arrangements, inside the Gnostic religious space, have been vested with new meanings and inserted in a multitude of theological constructions (oft-times heretical, oft-times esoteric), inside the Abrahamic religious spaces. The successive rewritings, the immersions into oblivion and the recollections, its condemnations and its clandestine survival, the alternation of the periods of apparent extinction with the periods of intense efflorescence represent one of the most spectacular cases of occultation and revivification of a great archaic Myth in the history of the religious ideas. The arguments that prove the presence of the Gnostic-Iranian dualism in the spiritual space of Khirbet Qumran have already been mentioned. In the apologetic context of Patristic Christianity, Clement of Alexandria (approximately 140 / 150 – 211 / 215 CE) will value the person and the conduit of the “Gnostic” as the religious ideal of the accomplished Christian believer. Defined as a “confession towards God”, the martyrdom of the Clementine Gnostic is susceptible to transmute each and every soul’s knowledge (*Gnosis*) of God into the testimony of “life and word”, which consists in the shedding of “belief and blood” during the entire earthly existence, until the liberation, parting or

⁷² Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 275-294. S. K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975, pp. 27-155. André-Jean Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006, pp. 44-377. William Keith Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, pp. 316-345. William Keith Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 18-84. Ivan M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941, pp. 140-155. Carl Schneider, *Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus*, II, München: C. H. Beck, 1969, pp. 800-885, 989-1106. Eliade, *Histoire des croyances*, II, pp. 163-200, pp. 260-307.

⁷³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris: Plon, 1958, p. 240.

“departure” of the breath of life from the body⁷⁴. The doctrine concerning “the two Cities”, a City of Evil, “terrestrial”, founded on the “love of the self” and the “contempt of God”, and a City of Good, “celestial”, founded on the “love of God” and the “contempt of the self”, proves the existence of a certain continuity between the Manichaean period and the Christian period included in the spiritual biography of Augustinus Aurelianus (354-430 CE), the persistence of the Manichaean theology acquired during his discipleship in the School of Faustus of Meleve, as well as a marginal syncretism between Gnostic ideas and Christian ideas in the Latin-African Patristic milieu⁷⁵. The doctrine concerning the confrontation between the Principle of Evil and the Powers of Good (a Holy Pope, *vir spirituales*), intercalated between the second *status* and the third *status*, included in the system of mystical theology conceived by Gioacchino da Fiore (1135-1202), could somehow be suspected of Gnostic influences, as well as the apocalyptic ideal according to which the entire humanity would join the monastic orders, a social configuration that will determine the end of the world, due to the impossibility of the human bodies to have sexual intercourse and to procreate⁷⁶. The Fatimid Ismaelism will incorporate the archaic Gnostic theology and mythology within the religious space of Islam and will inaugurate a new historical period and a new spiritual structure for the rewriting and spreading of the Gnostic ideas, clothed in the textual garb of the Fatimid or *Sufi* terminology, within a wide geographical area which circumscribed Egypt, Arabia, Persia, India, between the years 296 A.H. / 909 AD (the founding of the Fatimid dynasty by 'Obaydallah al-Mahdi, in Cairo) and 524 A.H. / 1130 AD (the death of Abul'-Qasim al-Tayyib, the last Fatimid *imam*). In the Fatimid *Gnosis*, the Primordial Divinity will be designated as the “Principle” (*Mobdi*) or the “Mystery of Mysteries” (*ghayb al-ghoyub*), while the *Pleroma* will be designated by the syntagms '*alam al-Ibda*' or '*alam al-Amr*, the “World of Being”, in contrast with '*alam al-khalq*, the cosmos, the material world. The process of the ontological emanation or descent (*inbi'ah*) has its origin in the “First Intelligence” or the “Universal Intelligence”, *deus revelatus*, '*Aql koll*. The tragedy of the fall into sinfulness has as its protagonist the Celestial Archetype of Adam, *Adam ruhani*, who will fall from the third rank (the “Third Intelligence”) onto the tenth rank of the celestial hierarchy, as a consequence of his self-blindness, of the temptation to transgress the limit (*hadd*), induced by the shadow of the Principle of Evil (*Iblis*, *Satan*, *Ahriman*). The gap consisting in the seven celestial lost steps, symbolized by the “Seven Cherubs” or the “Seven Words of the Light”, defines the hiero-history of the Septimanian or Fatimid Shi'ism as a “belated eternity”. The Fatimid anthropology is focused on the ontological ascent of the “partial man” (*joz'i*) and the “Primordial Man”,

⁷⁴ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, IV, IV, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 163-568.

⁷⁵ Augustinus Aurelianus, *De Civitate Dei*, XIV, XXVIII; XV, VI; XIX, XIX, Philip Schaff, Henri Wace (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, II, Grand Rapids, Michigan: : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 1-511.

⁷⁶ The prophecies of Gioacchino da Fiore (*Liber Concordiae* or *Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti, Expositio in Apocalypsim, Psalterium decem chordarum*) were published in Venice in the 16th century. Pope Alexander the 4th condemned the gioacchinism in 1263. Jacob E. Safra, Jorge Aguilar Cauz (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago / Auckland / Geneva / London / Madrid / Manila / Rome / Paris / Seoul / Sydney / Tokyo / Toronto: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2007, “Joachim of Fiore”, vol. VI, pp. 558.

Anthropos (*Adam al-awwal al-kolli*), towards the level of a substantial re-identification (soul, spirit) with *Adam ruhani*, as well as on the theocratical-apocalyptical strategy of the returning of the Light (*Ishraq*) into the *Pleroma*⁷⁷. Shihab-ud-din Yahya Suhrawardi (549 A.H. / 1155 CE – 585 A.H. / 1191 CE) is the author of the famous treatise of illuminative theosophy, entitled *Kitab Hikmat al-Ishraq*, the “Book about the Wisdom of the Light”, as well as the founder of the Sufi community of the *Ishraqiyyun*⁷⁸. In a *risalah* entitled *A Tale about the Occidental Exile*, Suhrawardi will rewrite, with a complex Sufi-Persian lyrical-theosophical arrangement, *The Hymn of the Pearl* and the mystical theology of redemption of the *salvator salvatus*⁷⁹ type.

The origin of the Great Myth about Light and Darkness should be searched for, perhaps, in the proximity of the uncertain space of the beginnings of the history of ideas and the history of human thinking, where the primordial binary thinking has its foundation: day-night, light-darkness, life-death. The systems of the Gnostic theology and mythology have synthesized and developed an impressive spiritual treasure, which reverberated along multiple channels within the civilization of the Hellenistic Antiquity, as well as within the civilization of the Oriental and Occidental Middle Ages. The problem of the origin of evil and the strategy of redemption, in a micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic context, are two of the religious grounds of the complex mythological and theological constructions that constitute the Gnostic religious space. The confrontation between Good and Evil, the War between Light and Darkness, configure vast celestial or cosmic landscapes that circumscribe the inextricable labyrinth of the divine-human ontology, the tragic-blissful destiny of the human beings along the way of life, death and salvation, as well as the infinite potentialities of the knowledge to make whole again the theocracy of the Light, after its fall into the inferior regions. The Gnostic thinking fascinates through its spectacular features, tragic scenes, ingenuous plots, through the breath-taking *suspense* concerning the outcome of the War between Light and Darkness, through a “realism” of a mystical, metaphysical order, that explains *in a different way* the intertwined presence of Good and Evil within the world and within the human being. The savagery of some of the anthropogonical scenes included in the Gnostic mythology seems to recollect a series of ancestral, archetypal gestures, an atavistic, pre-historical ontological treasure, the horrible origins of the human family, *horrenda primordia*, confirmed by the researches of the paleoanthropology and anthropology. The ontological descendant and ascendant trajectories are concluded with the victory of the Light, with an apotheosis of the salvaged Light. Inevitably, in the border-interval between the eras, the confrontation between Gnosticism and Christianity occurred, and the stake of this collision between two religious spaces of such a magnitude was the absolutist rule over the Mediterranean *orbis* and the accomplishment of the theocratical universalism that is intrinsic

⁷⁷ Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, I-II, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, I, pp. 112-136. The scholarly fighting against the dualist religions, led by the School of the Mu'tazilites, proves their spreading and their vitality throughout medieval Islam. Guy Monnot translated and edited two treatises of heresiology indited by 'Abd Al-Jabbar (320 A. H. / 932 CE – 415 A. H. / 1025 CE), one of the leaders of the School of the Mu'tazilites: *The Discourse against the dualists* and *The Discourse against the Magi*. Guy Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes*, Paris: J. Vrin, 1974, pp. 149-244, pp. 245-260.

⁷⁸ Corbin, *Histoire*, I, pp. 284-304.

⁷⁹ Shihab-ud-din Yahya Suhrawardi, *Risalah*, IX; W. M. Thackson (trans.), *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi*, London: The Octagon Press, 1982, pp. 100-108.

to the two religions. The initial Gnostic-Christian syncretism, that was relatively amiable at the level of its social and religious hypostasis, has preceded the vehement condemnation of the Gnosticism by the Ecclesiastical councils, its metamorphosis from a Hellenistic religion into a Christian heresy, included within the Christian religious space only in order to be destroyed.

Accustomed to be an adversary of the structures of power of the State and opened to any form of syncretism and vicinity with other religious spaces, which were gradually and surreptitiously assimilated through the translucency of their limits, the Gnostic religious space could not overpower Christianity, a religion which was “married”, after the age of the persecutions, after the Edict of Milan (313 CE), with the most powerful State of the Mediterranean world (the Roman State, the Byzantine State), towards the end of Antiquity. Nevertheless, the annihilation of Gnosticism was as relative and illusory as its polymorphic efflorescence. Far from being destroyed, the Gnosticism became occult, it metamorphosed itself into a religious *guerilla* and it chooses, with the irresponsible wisdom of a *trickster*, the historical spaces and times for its outstanding resurrections. In the Middle Ages, the Gnosticism ramifies and acquires new meanings within *Kabbalah*⁸⁰, Shi’ism and Sufism. The Bogomil Church will perpetuate the Gnostic ideas in the south-Danubian Slavic space and in the north-Danubian rural space, dominated by folklore spirituality. Through the occidental extension of the community of the Cathari, the Bogomilism will assert itself as the only intellectual “fashion” imported in the Occident of Europe from the region of the Balkans, and not the vice-versa. The Albigensian Crusade (1208-1244), led by Pope Innocent the 3rd and Simon of Montfort against Raymond the 4th, the Count of Toulouse, is considered as the only victorious Crusade. The Great Myth of Light and Darkness, occulted in the background canvas of the universal culture, continues to reverberate through sums of seen and unseen signs. From the perspective of the history of the religious ideas, the origin of the “Monad” as a philosophical notion, and of the “Monadology”⁸¹, included in the system of thinking elaborated by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), as well as the identity of the “Evil Demiurge”⁸², mentioned by E. M. Cioran (1911-1995), are easily recognizable.

⁸⁰ Moses Gaster and Gershom Scholem have thrown into relief the existence of a “Jewish Gnosticism”, included in the mystical theology of medieval Judaism. They unveiled the relationship which exists between the Gnostic spiritual universe and the pre-kabbalistic (*Merkabah*) and kabbalistic (*Kabbalah*) spiritual universe. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1974, “Second Lecture: *Merkabah* Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism”, pp. 40-79. Also Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York: Schocken Books, 1960.

⁸¹ Bertrand Russel, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 564-569. J. O. Urmson, Jonathan Rée, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 166-170.

⁸² E. M. Cioran, *Œuvres*, Paris: Gallimard, 1995, pp. 1169-1178.

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Preliminary Study of an unusual Greco-Egyptian magical gem (MNA E540) in the National Museum of Archaeology in Lisbon, Portugal

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Description of the gem

This ovoid magical gem, (MNA E540), measuring about 4.4 centimetres wide and 3.2 centimetres long, can be approximately dated to the 4th century CE, to judge from the Greek letters carved on it and the syncretism indicated by its iconography. The object depicts Anubis seating on stern, Akephalos (The Headless One), Harpocrates seated on a lotus flower, a man rowing the bark and Abraxas (the cock-headed anguipede). It is in good condition except for a fissure on the right side. This seems to be a natural defect on the stone since the border show no sign of cutting or damage. Also, the inscription seems to follow the outline of the “broken” area. There seems to be no indication of a missing letter. This piece belongs to a collection donated in 1969 to the MNA by António Bustorff Silva and, according to the catalogue of this collection edited in 1995 (*Um gosto privado, um olhar público: doações, D. Luis Bramão, Bustorff Silva, Barros e Sá*, Museu Nacional de Arqueologia, Lisboa: IPM, 1995), it is uncertain where Mr. Bustorff bought it. The object is displayed in the Egyptian Room of this Museum.

Carved in red jasper (Egyptian jasper is a brown and banded form of jasper which occurs as sporadic pebbles, cobbles and small boulders on the desert between the Red Sea and Cairo. The red jasper used for amulets is a symbol of life and the positive aspects of the universe. The rubric to chapter 156 of The Book of the Dead states that Isis knot (*tyet*), should be carved on a red jasper stone, (Germond, P., *Le monde symbolique des amulettes égyptiennes*, 5 continents editions, Milan, 2005, 17).

The Museum Catalogue describes the object as follows:

“An elliptical two-sided amulet presenting a complex mythological theme accompanied by some inscriptions. On the obverse the texts seem to be legends to the image and on the reverse a long inscription is divided into six lines; both series of texts are meaningless, with Greek letters following one after another without logic. Are we in the presence of a cryptographic text? The theme itself, carved in the face, has doubtful interpretation: in that you can see a papyrus boat made of horizontal displayed *cauli* reinforced by vertical united ones, with several figures upon them. Part of the object is broken, one of the boat extremities is now missing, apparently the bow, next to which we find a strange figure wearing a legionnaire’s uniform, an elm with a feather, a whip in the right hand and, instead of legs, two snakes curl and then project themselves to the side of the character, following a dynamic figure who seems to be rowing (you don’t see the oars, but under the boat, going in the direction of the figure, are two oars’ shuffles); at the centre we find the child Horus (Harpocrates or Horpakhred) coming out of the primeval lotus, we recognize this divinity because he has the finger from his right hand inside his mouth and shows in his left hand the *nekhakha* sceptre. The fourth figure on the boat seems to be a deceased person, judging from his stiff and naked image; finally, seating in the stern of the boat, curled back in the form of a lotus, we find Anubis with his typical

wild dog head. There are more amulets like this known to us, dating from the 2nd and 3rd century CE with figures which reflect a mix of different religious concepts; with Old Egyptian divinities making a stand, sometimes in bizarre iconographic interpretations. The present theme on this little object can illustrate that situation, with the funerary boat from Egyptian mythology connected to the Other Side surrounded by texts of probable magical-cryptic intentionality.”

Transcription

Some notes regarding it; as it can be acknowledged so far, considering that sometimes A can be Λ and vice-versa; this is due to the author of the gem never adding the crossbar to the A's so as to distinguish them from the Λ 's. Also some I's can also, by the same reason be H's, T's or Φ 's. No division of the *voces magicae* was attempted at the reverse side. The photos made available by the museum have the light enhancing some letters more than others (the vertical lines are more apparent than horizontal ones); other alternatives to read these letters will be studied in the next stage of the research.

Obverse 1-2:

This appears to be a series of angelic names, most or all ending in *-iêl* or similar (Mikhael?). Raphael is clear. Uriel, Gabriel, Mikhaël and Sariel are all Hebrew angles.

Obverse 3:

The first word is probably IAÔ. The last letter of the line looks very much like Hebrew, and perhaps should be transliterated accordingly.

Obverse 4:

The name at right is probably Raphaël again.

Reverse 1:

The first word looks like a variant on *arba*= four and maybe Adônai Mikhaël at the end of this line.

Reverse 2:

Embedded in this group may be Coptic words.

Reverse 3:

This seems to be a variant on the Akrammakhari formula.

Reverse 4:

The group reading might be Egyptian *Nwn* = Chaos-god.

Reverse 5:

Almost entirely illegible.

Reverse 6:

Is the first word a variant of Baienkhokh?

Names and *voces magicae* inscribed in the gem

This gem depicts five figures: a unique feature not found on other such objects.

It seems to have various names engraved in it: IAÔ, Sabaoth, (“Hebrew for ‘hosts’, particularly *yahveh sabaoth*, often in OT, only twice in NT which occurs in Greco-Egyptian magical texts very

commonly as IAÔ *sabaoth*, *sabaoth adonai*” and related forms, DuQuesne, 1991, 29, note 72), and related forms.

“Sabaoth occasionally appears on magical gems (...); Sabaoth by himself acquires a separate identity in Gnostic and magical texts, where he is an archon or intermediary spirit.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 29, note 74 and 75).

“IAÔ and Sabaoth form a common pairing in the PGM.” (Betz, 1992: 19, note 16).

Featured are Abrasax and some angelic names such as Raphael and Mikhael, and also numerous *voces magicae*. In an amulet depicting the Anguipede and Harpocrates as a youth, nude being, Bonner states: “It is not to be forgotten that writing on an amulet was believed to be powerful even though nobody could read it (...). Both the Anguipede and Harpocrates are solar divinities and the combination of the two in this stone is rare and of some interest” (Bonner, 1954: 150 with image on page 157) the gem here studied has got these divinities depicted which is extremely uncommon.

The Abrasax/Anguipede is a divinity that is often found on magical amulets from the Greco-Roman period. The words and names inscribed on these gems come from both the Greek and Demotical Magical papyri. For instance, Abrasax (say it 7 times...) is referred to in Papyrus Michigan 3, 156, PGM LXIX from the 2nd century CE: Betz, 1992, 297).

In the 3rd century CE the use of the Greek transliteration IAÔ is the form that clearly represents the *trigammaton* YHW.

In PGM III, 77, 119, YHVV is IAW, which is the Greek transliteration of the phonetic transcription IAO, an inverse (magical) substitution of the incomplete vowels of Adonai: *ianoda*. (Betz, 1992, 21) In the conjuration (IAÔ, Sabaoth, Adonai, Abrasax) are all referred to, and on page 21 the ‘sacred boat’ is mentioned. (Betz, 1992: 20)

Most of these words have long been considered untranslatable by scholars working with magical papyri and identical engraved gems.

The majority of extant magical papyri were brought from Egypt to Europe in the 19th century by Giovanni D’ Anastasi, who acquired a collection of texts found in a Theban tomb, but their exact provenance is still unknown. Most of them were published in 1927 by Preisendanz. The material from Greco-Roman Egypt reflects an amazingly broad religious and cultural pluralism. Not surprising is the strong influence of Egyptian religion throughout the PGM (...). Expressed in Greek, Demotic or Coptic, some texts represent simply Egyptian religion. In others, the Egyptian element has been transformed by Hellenistic religious concepts.

Most of the texts are mixtures of several religions (...)” (Meyer and Smith, 1999, 28; Betz, 1992, xlv).

The magicians made use of the divine name in various forms, and also other Hebrew terms in their Greek transcription, namely, Sabaoth, Adonai and others (...). “Magicians who were Egyptians or Egyptian used Greeks name Babylonian and Jewish or Syriac divinities in their charms. Where ever any knowledge of Gnostic methodology or Gnostic ideas had got abroad, it was natural that Gnostic elements should make their appearance in magical texts.” (Bonner, 1946: 25)

The inscriptions on these stones may have been inspired by Egyptian oracular papyri; which often substituted for stone amulets. On these gems the Egyptian contribution to Gnosticism is very striking.

In particular László Kakosy has pointed out that he sees in the Egyptian shrouds that depict Osiris, Anubis and the justified soul, evidence of Greek philosophical influence.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 11) could depict a Hellenized Egyptian god such as Harpocrates. They are written in Greek letters,

sometimes reading as palindromes, and they also may read as Coptic words (“Old Coptic may even have been devised originally for esoterical magical purposes and perhaps contemporary with the earliest biblical translations.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 11).

Words of power in the incantations are composed of long strings of vowels. The exact pronunciation of these *voces magicae* was the key to the success of the ‘spells’. Bonner also states that: “Further, it is an error in principle to assume that everything inscribed in plain Greek letters has a meaning which adequate ingenuity can discover. Nothing is more certain than that many combinations of letters simulating words in some unknown tongue are absolutely meaningless, even though they may occur and recur in apparently significant association with this or that divinity or with a certain symbol or design. In fact, the power imprinted to them depends upon their mysterious sound and their unintelligible character.” (Bonner, 1954: 305)

“It is possible, indeed probable, that the original language of the spell was Egyptian with the addition of some Greek and Hebrew words and names.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 11).

“Most of the *voces magicae* found in the magical papyri and on gems appear elsewhere in the genre and include formulae which are frequently encountered. It is also possible that, the syllables are meaningless and intended as a smokescreen to discourage prying on the part of non-initiates.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 17). “The *voces magicae* were an independent code from the Demotic, Greek and Coptic codes. Old Coptic used consisted letters of the Greek alphabet plus twelve Demotic letters added.” (Dieleman, 2005, 70-71).

The numerical value of each Greek letter could produce a sum, a special number, which was significant. Coptic inscriptions, early in the Christian era, called on angels to assist, thus turning these ‘spells’ into prayers. The ordinary spell could be repeated seven times, seven being a magical number (seven as a magical number in Egypt: Betz, 1992, 213, line 300, note 245), and could be recited over water or oil.

‘Deconstructing’ the five figures

The five figures depicted on this unique gem: Anubis, Akephalos, Harpocrates, Man and Abraxas, are connected with the whole cycle; birth, death and rebirth. They travel on a bark, a papyrus boat, which is associated with the rising and setting of the Sun. The solar bark can be associated with the Osiris bark and its rebirth cycle. Alongside such Egyptian deities as Anubis and Harpocrates there is the Headless One (“The headless god Akephalos referred to is seen by Preisendanz as a reference to the Egyptian practice of putting the heads of those who have been beheaded between their feet. (Betz, 1992: 123, note 19; 309, note 4; see also PGM CII 1-17).

Anubis

Anubis is the first figure on the left hand side of the gem. The deceased is greeted by Anubis, embalmed and brought before Osiris (*The Demotical Magical Papyrus of Leiden*, Col II).

“The jackals who are hypostases of Anubis tow the barque of the sun across the night sky, to bring the justified soul (Osiris) to rebirth. Elsewhere in PGM, the petitioner says in Coptic: ‘I am Anubis, I am Osiris-Re’ (I 251). (...) For this purpose Anubis may be regarded as the divine ‘midwife’, as he is in the *mammisis*, who may also act as Re’s representative.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 34, note 105).

“Seth is closely associated with Anubis in Ptolemaic and later religion, and magical gems show a dog-headed deity who may be either god.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 47-8).

Akephalos - The Headless One

A drawing of a Headless One figure is given at the end of PGM II 64-183. (Betz, 1992, 14, note 15, 18, line 170 figure). In Greek religion the Akephalos or Headless One is considered demonic and he is the people's chosen medicine for magical purposes. In ancient paganism faith people executed criminals who then became *Akephaloi* and had to go around heedless. In some pre-Christian Celtic funeral customs, heads were separated from the body. Celts believed the soul resided in the head, and that capturing a head meant that one captured the soul of an opponent. The Headless One is mentioned in some Greco-Egyptian charm papyri and amulets; some scholars interpret it both as Seth (related to Chaos), Osiris (cut into pieces by Seth), which can be connected to the Osiris' myth. He was widely invoked by priest-magicians for dream oracles in ancient Egypt and also exorcisms.

Man

The human figure depicted rowing the bark after Abraxas (from right) may be the person who commissioned the gem.

Harpocrates or the Lotus Primeval Child

Harpocrates was originally a symbol of resurrection and took an apotropaic function in Hellenistic times, becoming more closely associated with *heka* (magical power).

Here, Harpocrates is shown emerging from the primeval waters of creation on a lotus flower. In PGM IV, 1110, the Egyptian bean from the Nymphaean lotus is a reference to Horus on top of the lotus. (Betz, 1992: 57, note 133). The description of this common feature on gems is given by Bonner: “When a lotus is part of the design, Harpocrates usually sits on the flower (or capsule) with his knees drawn up, or with his legs hanging down as if the flower were a chair (...).” (Bonner, 1951: 310)

Again in PGM II, 989, 999-1000 and 1074-5 this standard depiction of Harpocrates is found in different stones during the Greco-Roman period. As in this gem, Harpocrates holds the flail, symbol of royalty: (note 156, same page). In lines 102 and 106-7 there is an invocation of the sun-god as a child sitting upon the lotus; the sun-god appears from the waters of Nun, the primordial abyss. (Betz, 1992, 57, note 133).

Harpocrates can also be identified with Horus as a child, being born from the reunited Osiris, the ‘divine Child’. As El-Khachab states: “Harpocrates is the same personification of Horus ‘the divine boy, son of Osiris, born of Isis’ and absorbed all his attributes; thus the Metternich Stela addresses him (...). The two names Horus and Harpocrates denote one god.” (El-Khachab, 1971: 32)

He personifies the newly born Sun each day, the first strength of the Winter Sun, and probably also appealed to people as a patron deity of childhood and as an instructive model for youth. He symbolizes the child in the womb, the lotus, with the index finger pointing to his mouth in a gesture of silence, “(...) so at once put your right finger on your mouth and say: ‘Silence! Silence! Silence! (...)’”: (Betz, 1992: 49, line 557); Examples of this common depiction on stones engraved gems show

Harpocrates with his finger to his mouth: (note 83, same page); indicating the silence of gestation and potential life. In PGM XIII, 343-646, line 387, the 'new period' 'which they call the birth of Horus' is probably the Spring equinox: Betz, 1992: 183 (note 81); the birth of Horus was also a festival celebrated at the 28 of Pharmouthi, falling close to March, 21st.

"Harpocrates represents the young-son-god; he is the first rays of the rising Sun (...) as the young god of the rising Sun, Harpocrates was represented seated crouching on a lotus capsule; he became the personification of the Sun rising from the primordial sea and the child raises his finger towards his lips." (El-Khachab, 1971: 133)

The ritual process involving baptism (Layton, 2002: IV 76-80), described in The Gospel of The Egyptians can be linked to the power of the Nile waters symbolized in this gem. All the divinities involved sail on the Nile. This Gospel is a "hymn of mystical union coming from a Sethian Gnostic sect and represents the climax of The Holy Book of The Great Invisible Spirit." (Meyer and Smith, 1999, 69). In the Greek version, most of the writings use Christian terminology. This text presents a cosmogony with a trinity; father, mother and son, showing the diversity of perspectives among the first Christians.

This work also uses metaphors of water and the deity in it includes a 'son' (Layton, 2002: IV 50); "the true nature of this deity is inexpressible silence, and the language breaks out in abstract vowel chanting (...)." (Meyer and Smith, 1999, 69).

The lotus on which Harpocrates is seated has a special meaning too: it represents rebirth reinforcing the idea transmitted by the child himself.

According to Éva Liptay, "the lotus flower accounted for the first time in creation and thereafter every morning repeatedly the Sun god, depicted either as a child or a scarab, came into the world from the calyx of a lotus that emerged out of the primeval water. Hence, the lotus flower was honoured not only as the symbol of creation but as one of the principal protectors of the newborn god." (A *propos* of the exhibition at the Budapest Museum, *Repelling Demons-Protecting Newborns*, 2005, Oct 21st to Nov 20th).

In PGM II, 107, Apollo is invoked and he is described as "(...) the figure of an infant child seated upon a lotus (...)." (Betz, 1992: 16).

To judge from the Greco-Egyptian gems at the British Museum (Michel, 2001), Abrasax, IAÔ, the image of a child on a lotus, Sabaoth and Osiris are common features in these identical gems. (Michel, 2001, 14, 16, 21, 22, 27, 28, 59, 62, 111, 112, 116, 121, 127, 129).

As Harpocrates/Horus, Abrasax is to be identified with the pantheistic standing figure on the upper part of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art's Metternich Stela. Above, a figure with similar characteristics to Abraxas flanks Horus and two other entities that stand upon coiled snakes, next to a hieroglyph inscription which describes the magical cure worked upon the infant Horus by Thoth, when Isis cried for help to the 'Boat of Eternity' while she and Horus were hiding in the marshes and the child became ill. Thoth was sent from the sun boat to help and cured Horus by reciting some 'spells'.

"Harpocrates (...) became a private god of the home and of the lower classes. Therefore he played an enduring role in magic and remained a powerful god long after the appearance of Christianity in Egypt." (El-Khachab, 1971: 137)

Abrasax/Abraxas/Anguipede

“Compounds with *abra* occur often in magical texts. The cock-headed anguipede commonly found on magical gems is called Abraxas or Abrasax, a name encountered in the magical papyri too.” (DuQuesne, 1991: 37-8 (note 120). “The word *abra*, very common in these gems, maybe a variation of *arba* = 4, in Hebrew and Arabic, designating the *Tetragrammaton*.” Betz, 1992: 37 (note 12); 293 (line 34): “(...) *abra* may be an abbreviation for Abrasax or Adonai.” also 365 as the exact correspondence to the days in the year ‘truly Abrasax’: 146 (line 49).

On examples such as Rossi’s Gnostic Tractate, from Turin, “a series of protective spells to be used by a person who wishes to adjure the powers of the divine realm against malevolent forces.” (Meyer and Smith, 1999, 133-146).

The Anguipede is also known as *anguipedis* (Latin for eel-footed). It was believed that Abraxas was the name of a god who incorporated both order and chaos in one single entity, and therefore represented a singular god, not benevolent all the time. The Anguipede is often found on magical amulets from the Greco-Roman Period. His name was possibly derived from the Hebrew word (*Ha-b'rakah*, blessing or sacred name). Both PDM and PGM testify that Hebrew elements were integrated in the thought of magicians settled in Egypt. Abraxas was depicted with the head of a rooster, the armour of a Roman legionnaire, eel feet, and a whip which may be a magic wand in his right hand. The Greek *magos* used a magic wand (Latin *magica virga*) to make magic effective.

The letters of Abraxas, in Greek notation, make up the number 365 (“In the Apocryphon of John, the human body is constructed by 365 angels. In PGM the number 365 is commonly associated with the name Abraxas but also with 365 gods, 365 knots”... (PGM VII 452-3) (Betz, 1992, 40, note 43), and the Gnostics named the 365 orders of spirits which, as they believed, emanated in succession from the Supreme Being. In a magical papyrus it is expressly stated that Abraxas is equivalent to 365, the number of days in the year, and derives this word from the Coptic. (“Abraxas adds up according to *gematria* to the number of days in the year (365) and is a formula for the pantheistic deity.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 38, note 120).

In PGM II, Abrasax is mentioned as a part of a long list of repeated vowels and *voces magicae*. (*Voces magicae* “are written in a careful hand and may have a coded significance, perhaps if written as acrostics. Numerical values, such as those ascribed by *gematria* in kabbalistic study, may also be important, although there are difficulties in Coptic, where the number of alphabetical letters was not fixed at the material time.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 17).

“Such a god could protect the wearer of an amulet. Thus it seems probable that the cock-headed god of the magical amulets has his snaky legs to denote him as the god of the netherworld, just as the cock’s head shows him to be the god of the Sun, the light (...) “Thus I think that we have to understand the cock-headed anguipede in military costume as the all-embracing omnipotent cosmic god.” (Nilsson, 1951: 4)

In this *The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris* “the Coptic hierogamy is being enacted, literally or symbolically or both, to bring a magical child to birth.” (DuQuesne, 1991, 55).

The seven vowels (Layton, 2002: IV 54; Dieleman, 2005: 64) of the *voces magicae* refer to IAÔ which were intended to represent one of the Hebrew names (“(...) names ending in *-ôt* and *-ôth*. The use of Hebrew names was considered effective by the exponents of the magical papyri.” DuQuesne, 1991, 29, note 69), for god which is not to be read out loud.

Some preliminary conclusions

Amulets were made to give both living and deceased people a touch of special protection from malevolent beings and influences. They could be made by special order to be worn with an intended objective; cure a disease, to attract someone, to protect a newborn, to ensure a good trip or to empower someone. This particular gem is thought to date from between the second half of the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century CE.

Abraxas, one of the deities here portrayed, is usually regarded as a typical invocation name; Irenaeus stated that it was invented by Basilides (c. 125 CE). This statement is now regarded as an error and the name may have been invented earlier but there's no material basis for placing it in pre-Christian times. The growing influence of Greek cult terminology and ideas had a profound impact on the writing of both PDM and PGM and on magical objects made in Egypt in Roman times.

The context of the letters carved in this gem is a syncretic juxtapositioning reference containing ancient Egyptian, Jewish, Greek and ancient Christian religious and magical names.

The preliminary conclusions for the research done so far on this gem are that it is more complex than the majority of Greco-Egyptian amulets and is apparently unique. Quoting Nock, 1929: 233:

"I would close by remarking on three tasks which await accomplishment. First, the proper study of the *voces magicae*; second, the making of a corpus of magical drawings in the papyri and an accompanying study of their iconographic bearings. Third, the making of a corpus of the so-called Abraxas-gems."

Acknowledgements

To both Terence Duquesne and Bink Hallum for providing transcription and notes about it as well as special thanks to Terence for all the guidance provided.

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Images



Fig. 1 Obverse of the gem



Fig. 2 Reverse of the gem

Magical Gem in Lisbon Museum
(a very tentative transcription)

obverse

1 ΟΥΡΙΗΛ ΡΑΦΑΗΛ ΡΑΣΟΙΗΛ
2 ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ΧΑΚΡΙΗΛ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΣΑΡΙΗΛ
3 ΙΑΩ ΝΚ ΠΑΓΑΖ
4 ΣΑΗΛ ΡΑΦΑΗΛ
5 ΣΑΡΙΗΛ
6 ΚΟΥΣΤΙΗΛ

reverse

1 ΙΑΡΒΑΙΑΗΛ ΠΑΜΝΗΙΙΙΙΑΩΧΝΗΙΜΕΩ
2 ΦΗΣΟΟΦΑΝΟΙΙΙΕΣΔΑΝΚΑΝΗΙΑΡΑ
3 ΑΚΡΕΝΡΟΚΟΡΦΙΟΑΦΙΣΙΩΚΑΚΗΙΠΥΤΚΕΝΤΙ
4 ΚΕΝΤΕΝΚΙΚΙΔΕΥΤΕΝΥΣΣΕΥΑΥΝΥΝ
5 ΑΥΚΥΝΖΥΛΥΚΥΝΖΥΝΤΑΚΡΗΥΡΝ
6 ΘΗΝΩΡΚΑΡΚΑΚΑΝΟΥΚΥΝΝ

Fig. 3 Transcription

The Sakas, Scythians, and Bactrians in Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* and Herodotus' *Historiae*

Dan-Tudor Ionescu

This short article aims at drawing a comparison between the image of the Central Asian nomadic and equestrian peoples described by Arrian in his *Anabasis Alexandri* and the picture of the European Scythians as it is drawn by Herodotus in his *Historiae*. Nevertheless, despite Arrian's own knowledge and experience of the Alani's and Parthians' fighting tactics during the first half of the second century A.D., the core of the Greek classical tradition about the Scythians' way of life had still a great impact on the *forma mentis* of all the classical writers, be they Greek or Latin, down to the Imperial Roman Age.

First of all, who were the Scythians for the ancient Greeks and Romans? From Homer and Herodotus to the Roman Imperial Age, and even to the time of the Byzantine Empire, the Scythians have represented a general term for nomadic barbarians of the steppes, from the North of the Black Sea to Central Asia. We shall not dwell on the meaning of the word Scythians (and Cimmerians) in the epic Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Scythians (Σκύθαι) and Cimmerians (Κιμμέριοι) appeared in Homer's epics as mythical peoples or tribes, beyond the borders of the world known to the Achaean Greeks. On the contrary, in the *Historiae* of Herodotus, the Scythians and the related Central Asian tribes, like the Massagetae, appear like very real peoples, but their history, as narrated by "the Father of History", seems to be deeply influenced by myth and legend.

The Scythians were mentioned in some of the books of the *Historiae* written by Herodotus, but the *λόγος* almost entirely dedicated to them was the *Historiae*'s fourth book, named *Melpomene* (the nine books of Herodotus' *Historiae* had titles corresponding to the Nine Muses). They are also mentioned in the first and the fifth books of Herodotus' *Historiae* (I, 103-106, on the Scythians' invasion in Asia and I, 204-206, on the battle between the Persians of Cyrus II the Great and the Massagetae of Queen Tomyris; V, 9-10, about the Median Sigynnes) as well as warriors pertaining to a unit of Xerxes' invasion army against the Greeks, in the seventh book of the *Historiae*. Those Scythians included in the Persian army are the Central Asian Σάκαι, who fought alongside the Bactrians (Βάκτριοι). It is interesting that, in this quotation of Herodotus (VII, 64-65), the Sakas and the Scythians are seen as essentially the same people (Σάκαι/Σκύθαι), and these Central Asian Scythians (the Sakas) are brigaded in the same unit with the Bactrians. They are commanded by Xerxes' own brother Hystaspes (not to be mistaken for his grandfather, Hystaspes, the father of King Darius I), the son of Darius I, King of the Medes and Persians, and of his wife, Queen Atossa (Cyrus'II daughter). The Central Asian Scythians (the Sakas or Ἀμύργιοι Σκύθαι) and the Bactrians are mentioned along other military units of the Achaemenid Persian army, also drafted from Eastern Iran and Central Asia. These detachments of soldiers recruited from the Eastern satrapies also included Sogdians (Σόγδοι), Parthians (Πάρθοι), Chorasmians (Χοράσμοι), and of the inhabitants of Easternmost Iran and Northwestern India, the Ἀριοι, Γανδάριοι, and Λαδίκαι.

Herodotus' first book gives us information on the history of the Scythians and of a related *ethnos*, the Massagetae of Central Asia, located between the Oxus and the Iaxartes (Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya). Thus, Herodotus (I, 103-106) wrote that the Scythians invaded Mesopotamia and Iran and penetrated in Asia to the borders of Egypt, and for twenty-eight years ruled over the Medes, until they were expelled and returned to the Eurasian steppes. The Massagetae are mentioned by Herodotus (I, 204-206), in the context of Cyrus' the Great campaign against them. It is the famous episode of the clash between Cyrus and Queen Tomyris of the Massagetae, and in this expedition the military might of the hitherto invincible Persians was broken. According to Herodotus, Cyrus the Great himself fell in battle. The Massagetae are portrayed as Sun-worshippers, dreaded horsemen, and fierce warriors wearing bronze weaponry. Copper and gold seemed to be their favorite metals. Their economy consisted of cattle rising (they were nomadic pastoralists) and fishing, and probably also of hunting, although Herodotus keeps silence on the hunting practices of the Massagetae. The wooing customs of the Massagetae are also mentioned (the hanging of the warrior's quiver of arrows on the cart of his beloved lady).

The fifth book of Herodotus deals with the lands beyond the Ister/Istros (Lower Danube); he mentions a strange population named Σιγόννες, kin and colonists of the Medes (therefore, they were an Iranian speaking population), living in carts dragged by a breed of small but sturdy shaggy horses, a sort of bigger ponies. This tribe or tribal union, *ethnos*, represented probably a Scythian or Scythian-like people living a nomadic life between the steppes northwest of the Black Sea and the lands of Central Europe, north of the Adriatic Sea. They appear in Herodotus' book V (9-10).

By far, the most important book of Herodotus, dealing with the Scythian issue, is the fourth book of his *Historiae*. This fourth book (*Melpomene*), represents in fact in its greater part (IV, 1-142) a Scythian λόγος. Everything is mentioned here: the mythical explanations of the Scythian origins, the invasion and migration of the Scythians, who attacked and drove out the Cimmerians (and also the tale of the disagreement between the Cimmerian kings and their people), the Scythians being themselves under pressure from the Massagetae of Central Asia, or (in an alternative version) from the Issedones of the North, who were themselves hardly pressed by the Arimaspi (all these peoples appear to be more legendary than historical). Herodotus presents two legends about the Scythians origins: the legend of Targitaos, the son of Zeus and a nymph, daughter of the river-god Borysthenes (Dnieper), his three sons, ancestors of three Scythian peoples and the contest for power between them, and then the tale of the three sacred objects, the golden cup (φιάλη), the battle axe (σάραρις), and the yoke and plough (άρστρον), all made of gold. The three brothers, ancestors and eponyms of three Scythian peoples, tried to get possession of the gold, but only the youngest of them, Kolaxais, could have the royal gold and so was able to become king; the other two brothers, Lipoxais and Arpoxais, became ancestors and leaders of other two Scythian *ethne*, but subordinated to their younger brother, Kolaxais. In his turn, Kolaxais divided his kingdom between his three sons, and he who had the royal holy gold was the rightful king. This is a myth which is current between the Indo-European populations, for example in the tale of the three brothers, ancestors of the Macedonian Argead dynasty, or in the legend of the three Varangian brothers, founders of the state of the Kievan Rus'. Elements of the same myth are also recurring in the northern *Niflungarsaga* and in the German *Nibelungenlied*. In the Macedonian legend, the youngest of the three brothers,

Perdiccas/Karanos, become the first king of the Macedonians. In the monk Nestor's Russian chronicle of Kiev, *Povesti vremeni let*, Hroerek/Rurik is the one of the three Viking warlords who founded the Norsemen's power in Novgorod/Holmgard and thus was the ancestor of the Russian princes of Kiev. In the *Nibelungenlied*, there are also the three Burgundian princes (and brothers) from Rhineland, initially allied with the Frankish hero Sivrit/Siegfried (Sigurd in the Scandinavian-Icelandic *Niflungarsaga*), and one of these Germanic epic poems' themes is the quest for the forbidden or cursed kingly gold of the *Nibelungen*, bringer of kingship and doom. The three sacred Scythian objects themselves are characteristic for the three Indo-European functions, so well known in all the works of Georges Dumézil, the great French scholar of Indo-European mythology.¹

Herodotus also narrates a version of this myth, as heard from the Greeks of Olbia: Heracles, coming back to Greece from the taking of the cows of Geryones, begot three sons, Agathyrus, Gelonus, and Skythes, with a strange creature, a kind of Echidna (half maiden, half snake, in short, a serpent girl). In order to decide who will stay in their motherland and who will leave, Heracles thought of an ordeal: after the three youths reached the age of manhood, their mother Echidna will give them the girdle and also the bow and arrows of their father's; the one who could draw the bow and use the girdle will stay (presumably as king of the land), and the others will leave in quest of a new country. Skythes, the youngest, won the contest and the other two brothers left. Agathyrus would eventually become king and ancestor of the Agathyrsi, Gelonus of the Geloni, and Skythes of the Scythians.

We shall not insist about all of Herodotus' Scythian narrative. It is enough to say that his Scythian *λόγος* is full and packed with mythical, historical as well as ethnographical and geographical details. The shamanistic and ecstatic elements of their religion (Herodotus IV, 74-75), the Scythian and Greek names of their gods and goddesses (Zeus-Papaios, Poseidon-Thagimasadas, Apollon-Goitosyros, Heracles, Ares the god of war symbolized by a sword/ἀκινάκης, Ge-Api the wife of Zeus-Papaios, Aphrodite Ourania-Argimpasa, Hestia-Tabiti, in Herodotus IV, 59-63), the distinction between the religion of the kings (worshippers especially of Poseidon-Thagimasadas) and the cults of the people (likewise in the case of the Thracians, where the gods worshipped by all Thracians were Ares, Dionysos, and the goddess Artemis, but the Thracian kings adored mainly the god Hermes, in Herodotus V, 7-8), are also essential components of Herodotus' Scythian story. We can also refer to the treatment of prisoners and slaves (Herodotus IV, 2-4). The animal and human sacrifices, the rituals of war like drinking the blood of one's first slain enemy, the head hunting (similar somehow to the Celtic war practices) and the taking of scalps (we are irresistibly reminded of the North American Indian warriors) and even the flaying or skinning the enemy for making ornaments and quivers for bow and arrows or drinking from cups made out of enemies' skulls, the blood brotherhoods, and the Scythian divinatory rituals and practices, the funerary rites for the kings and for the commoners, are also mentioned (Herodotus IV, 64-75). He continues with other tales, the most important being the expedition of Darius I against the Scythians and the weapons and tactics used by the Scythians in war and in negotiations (the five gifts presented to Darius: the mouse or rat, the frog, the bird, and the five arrows, in Herodotus IV, 131-134), the different peoples of Scythia in the time of

¹ Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée*, *passim*.

Darius I and their ways of life, the nomadic lifestyle of the true Scythians, the rivers of Scythia from the Ister (Danube) to the Tanais (Don), in sum, all these elements create a vivid but uneven story. Herodotus appear to us as a *λογογράφος* or a *λογοποιός*, a writer or maker of *λόγοι*, of stories, and the truth is often left for the reader to find or rather to choose from different versions. To sum up, Herodotus seems to be, as much as his Ionian predecessors, (of which the best known were Hecataeus of Miletus), dependent on *ἀκοή* (hear-say from local informants, Greeks or Barbarians speaking Greek or having Greek-speaking interpreters) and preceding Greek oral and written tradition, but trying to build rather on personal experience and on what he had personally seen on the spot, with his own eyes (*αὐτοψία*). There were also other Greek literary predecessors and contemporaries of Herodotus: one must mention Scylax of Karyanda, the author of a written account of the sailing expedition from the Upper Indus to the Indian Ocean, and then from the Arabian Sea to Egypt, a voyage of discovery, exploration, and conquest (or at least intended for the opening of new trade routes). The probable title of this book or navigation report was *Περίπλους*. Other Greek writers of approximately the same period (before and during Herodotus' lifetime) were Hellanicus of Lesbos (Mytilene), Xanthus of Lydia (Sardes), Pherecydes, Charon of Lampsacus, Dionysius of Miletus, or half mythical figures like Aristaeus of Proconessus and the Scythian Anacharsis, who became one of the seven sages of Ancient Greece in some versions of their list.²

Herodotus the teller of tales is a never ending source for analysis, comparison, and debate. It is the historian's and classical philologist's tasks to analyze, interpret, and decide whether "the Father of History" was also "the Father of lies". Nevertheless, this task is not at all an easy one, due to the fact that the different views on the "historical truth" in ancient societies still dominated by oral tradition even in their literate period (like in Herodotus' own Greek world) and our own "modern" ideas on scientific and historical truth. Definitely, Herodotus does not belong to the world of epistemology, but rather to a very classical Greek world, where *mythos* and *logos* went together hand in hand, and blended into each other, somehow like the transformations of Fire in the written *Fragmenta* of another famous Ionian, the "obscure" Heraclitus of Ephesus. Modern archaeology has sometimes denied and belied Herodotus or rather has seen and shown his knowledge as an imperfect one. For example, with regard to the Scythian royal funerals, Herodotus stated that the Scythian royal tombs were located only in the land bordered by the rivers Gerrhus and Borysthenes (Dnepr), but the Scythian royal kurgans were found all over Scythia, from the Danube, Tyras (Dnestr), and Hypanis (Bug) to the Tanais (Don), and even further.³

One can already see that Herodotus' method of presenting a given topic consists in the exposition of different versions of the same tale: for the origins of the Scythians, he gives two or even three mythical versions and the "historical" explanation of the attack of the Massagetae, which precipitated Scythian invasion and migration in the land of the Cimmerians, a fact which, according to Herodotus, led to the disagreement between the Cimmerian kings (who wanted to stay and fight for their country) and the common people who didn't want to stand their ground

² Adelina Piatkowsky, *Studiu Introductiv*, in Herodot, Istoriei, vol. I, București, 1998, pp. 25-39.

³ Johannes A. H. Potratz, *Die Skythen in Südrussland Ein untergegangenes Volk in Südosteuropa*, Basel, 1963, pp.36-37; Herodotus IV, 71-75.

and fight back. Eventually, if we choose to believe Herodotus (IV, 11-12), the Cimmerian kings killed each other in a series of single combats or rather in a pitched battle which opposed two groups of Cimmerian kings, of equal numbers. The Cimmerian kings' tombs can be seen even today, concludes Herodotus, on the borders of the Tyras (Dnestr). It is clear from this example that Herodotus blended myth (or legend) and "history", even in his "historical" versions of the events he pretends to narrate. The kurgans or tumuli visible even today in the steppe region bordering the Dnestr River were, in Herodotus' opinion, the tombs of the fallen kings of the half mythical Cimmerians. Other interesting information concerns the name of the Scythians themselves, which according to Herodotus (IV, 6) were divided in three main tribal groups, and their common name was *Σκόλοτοι*. The Scythian allegation of their people being the youngest of all peoples and the above mentioned legends of Targitaos and Heracles as the progenitors of the Scythian peoples (Herodotus IV, 5-10) are representative for Herodotus' style or way of presenting local legends and their version in the *interpretatio graeca*. In contrast to the Egyptians, the eldest people of the world known to Herodotus and his Greek contemporaries (Herodotus II, 2, 1-3), at least according to the Egyptian sayings, the Scythians are the opposite, geographically as well as in terms of age, climate, pattern of civilization or cultural model. The *Uralt* Egypt of the South is opposed to the young peoples of the northern steppes, and the Greeks are in the middle or at the point of intersection of these two axes, uniting the North and the South, and also East and West.⁴

To sum up, Herodotus' fourth book is very important because of the image it created about the Scythians, an image that was meant to last. Nevertheless, this book does not refer only to Scythians; another part is dedicated to the Getae, the Thracian people who inhabited the lands north of the Haemus (Balkans) and the valley of the Lower Danube. Herodotus (IV, 89-96) mentioned their resistance against Darius' I invading army and the mystic cult of Salmoxis-Gebeleizis and his possible link with the philosophy of Pythagoras, a hypothesis mentioned but not embraced at all by "the Father of History". This component of Herodotus' fourth book can be compared with his information on the Thracians, contained in the fifth book of his *Historiae* (V, 6-8). Of an even greater importance appear the relationships between the Scythian and the Thracian Odrysian royal houses, as narrated in the story of Scyles, Octamasades, and Sitalkes, a tale full of information about the deep but sometimes tensed relationships between the Scythian and the Greek culture on the shores of the Black Sea (Herodotus IV, 76-80). The most important element throughout Herodotus' fourth book appear to be his conception on world geography, on the three continents, Europe, Asia, and Libya, and his knowledge or at least mention of distant lands and peoples (from the Celts and the Kynetes of the Far West to the Northeastern peoples of Scythia (the nomadic and the Royal Scythians, and subjected to the power of the nomads, the Scythian tribes involved in agriculture, those tribes possibly being of non-Scythian origin; he also mentions many other tribes and peoples like the Geloni, Neuri, Budini, Sauromatae, and even the mythical Hyperboreans, etc.). Remarkably enough, the final part of the fourth book (IV, 145-205) no longer focuses on Scythia, but on Lybia and Cyrenaica, and on Egypt under the rule of the Persians.

⁴ Francois Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote*, *passim*.

Bactria appears in Herodotus' *Historiae* as a region subjected to the rule and authority of the Persian Achaemenid kings. In his third book, Herodotus gives us a list of populations and provinces tributaries to the Achaemenid king (Herodotus III, 89-105), and he mentions the Bactrians as neighbours of the Indians from the land of *Paktyike* and the city *Kaspatyros*. It is most probably the mentioning of the territories situated now between the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Herodotus (IV, 204) mentions the deportation of the Greeks from Barca in Cyrenaica to Bactria. This is by no means the only instance when the Persian kings transferred Greek speaking populations from Asia Minor (or from Libya, in the case of Barca) to Mesopotamia, Iran, and Central Asia. The cases of the Milesians (the inhabitants of Miletus), of the Eretrians of Euboea, or of the Branchidae of Didyma, are significant for the transfer of Greek speaking populations to the heart of Asia, under Achaemenid rule (Herodotus VI, 9, 20-25 and 119). On the military organization given by the Achaemenid kings Darius I and Xerxes to the Bactrians and the Central Asian Sakas (Scythians), it is not necessary to further dwell on this topic, because this it was discussed in the very beginning of this article.

Arrian gives us a very different impression: he of course knew Herodotus, and he has also taken Xenophon as his literary model, and he was familiar with the Greek classics, starting with Homer; but he also had knowledge of the sources of Alexander the Great's history and epic legend, sources nowadays almost totally lost to us. On the whole, his *Anabasis Alexandri*, is based upon the works of Ptolemaeus son of Lagus and of Aristobulus of Cassandreia, two known direct members of Alexander's staff and witnesses and participants in his expedition. In addition to them, he also uses other writers of the early Hellenistic period, including of course Cleitarchus. His Scythians, Sakas, Massagetae, Dahae, Bactrians, and Sogdians are presented as fierce warriors in pitched battles like Gaugamela (Arrian III, 8,3-15,7) and in the entire part of the third book following the battle of Gaugamela and the conquest of the Achaemenid capital cities, as well as in the fourth book of the *Anabasis Alexandri* these tribes are seen almost everywhere as the fiercest enemies of Alexander's Macedonians and Greeks and also as dreadful guerrilla fighters, when led by a military commander as able as Spitamenes. In the beginning of the fourth book, Arrian (IV, 1-2) narrates about the *ἄβριοι Σκόθαι*, "named by Homer as the most righteous of all men", and of the embassy of the European Scythians. Very interesting also is the discussion between the Macedonian king and Pharasmanes, king of the Chorasmians, who proposed to Alexander that they close an alliance, directed against Colchis, the land of the Amazons, and (although Arrian IV, 15, 4 did not specifically says so) against the Scythians of Europe. In the description of the battle of the Hydaspes, units of Scythian cavalry (soldiers recruited from the Central Asian Scythian tribes, Sakas, Dahae, etc.) appeared already integrated as mounted archers (*ἵπποτοξόται*) in Alexander's army (Arrian V, 12, 2). Prior to that most famous battle, the campaign of Alexander in Bactria and Sogdiana appears as a series of rebellions and guerrilla fights for the freedom of these Central Asian regions and their liberation from the Macedonian domination. Seen in this light, Bessus, Spitamenes, and the other less prominent Bactrian and Sogdian warlords are the real heroes of their peoples.

Nevertheless, Alexander pacified these regions with fire and sword, and the bloodshed of the three years of guerrilla wars (330-327 BC) fought in those unfortunate Eastern Iranian and Central Asian lands was prodigious. The Macedonian conqueror established military colonies to subject to his rule and pacify these territories. He crossed the Iaxartes or Orexartes River (the

Syr-Darya), mistook by Arrian as the Tanais (Don), and utterly defeated the Saka warriors beyond that river which became his empire's frontier with the Scythian Northeast (Arrian IV, 4). He founded his most northerly *Alexandreia Eschate/Alexandria Ultima* as an outpost against Scythian incursions; he received the formal submission of a Saka/Scythian king and his embassies, and although Central Asian Scythian/Saka warriors were the allies of the Bactrian and Sogdian freedom fighters, the Macedonian king tried to establish peaceful relations (at least for the moment) with the European Scythians, and a Scythian king even proposed to give his own daughter as wife to Alexander, and also to wed the daughters of Scythian aristocracy to the Macedonian noblemen. His offers were politely declined by Alexander (Arrian IV, 15, 1-4).

The geography of Bactria in Arrian's *Anabasis Alexandri* (for example III, 28, 5-7) is dominated by the presence of the great mountain range of the Hindukush, to the South of Bactria, mistakenly named Caucasus by Arrian, and seen as the continuation of the Taurus mountain range of Asia Minor. Elsewhere, Arrian calls this mountain range Paropamissus (see for example *Indica*, 2, 2-5).

Compared to Herodotus' Scythians, the image of the Sakas, Bactrians, and Scythians left by Arrian is poorer and seen almost entirely through the eyes of a competent military man who happened to be also a cultivated person (a rare combination, but not at all a unique one in the ancient world; suffice to think of Xenophon, of Caesar, of Marcus Aurelius, or of Emperor Julian, not to mention Alexander himself). The literary image of the Scythians left by Herodotus has lasted and it is the image which endured throughout the Ancient World.

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Indo-European Words

Ioana Costa

The Indo-European languages share a certain stock of lexical elements characterised by the absence of morphological features. This corpus of non-inflected elements is generally dealt with under specific headings: “adverbs”, “prepositions”, “conjunctions”, “numerals”, in specific cases “pre-verbs” and “particles”. From a synchronic standpoint the various categories of rigid elements share only one feature, *id est* the absence of inflection. On the other hand, their diachronic situation is completely different: the borders of non-inflected categories can not be strictly defined, so that these elements do have the appearance of a corpus whose components share much more than the absence of a feature: they share a series of roles which they accomplish in turn, they witness the same evolution, they manifest the same tendencies. Consequently, the traditional distinctions among “adverbs”, “prepositions” and *similia* are to be considered either definitions restricted to a certain chronological level of language, or as categories created on syntactic criteria. From a historical standpoint, they can be formally divided in transparent (analysable) and non-transparent (non-analysable) elements.

The words that are usually labelled as *inflexibilia* behave as a mixture of lexical elements; on the other side, the term “word” is ambiguous when dealing with pre-verbs (elements with an obvious independent status in a previous stage of the language), and particles in general. The difficulty of approaching them is due both to the form and the meaning: they only slightly allow decomposing in components of inferior level (most of them are only minimal complexes of phonemes); in the same time, they do have an amazing capability of entering superior units, where they semantically loose their individuality.

The traditional division used inside this mass of words is the result of assuming a syntactic criterion: “adverb”, “preposition”, “pre-verb”, “conjunction” are terms that can only be interpreted as syntactic devices, as the normal linguistic status of the Indo-European languages registers one of these words belonging simultaneously to different classes of words. An “adverb” that becomes “pre-verb” or “preposition” cannot be accepted but as a lexical unit which takes different syntactic functions regarding the members of the sentence. After assuming for a long time a certain syntactic role, a word inevitably gets special semantic and phonetic values, as much as constant syntactic relationship. This terminology (“adverb”, “pre-verb” etc.) can only be usefully handled in a synchronic plane that registers the constant values in a well-determined moment. Seen in the process, these lexical elements are to be recognised in different stages, when they settle themselves in a circumscribed usage; these stages are characterised by notable differences. Regarded as a whole, they consist in a mass of words of which some do not have inflexional marks (there are no recognisable inflexional marks, so that we might assume that these words had never been *flexibilia*); other words belonging to this class are doubtless *exflexibilia*, *id est* they are words with an aberrant behaviour: at a certain stage of their becoming, without changing anything of their phonetic aspect, they did not respond any longer to the demands of grammatical accord, they became rigid, assuming one single form.

From the standpoint of contrast between words that have a unique form and those that have a paradigm (with forms that can be deduced using the morphological rules) there might be assumed certain Proto-Indo-European models.

The class of words that have a unique form might be the result of putting together isolated elements, *ex-flexibilia*; the semantic and phonetic changes they suffered are considerably different and reflect the chronology of their grammatical seclusion: the “adverbial suffixes” -*mente* and -*ly* can be defined as such only when approaching them from the standpoint of Romance languages or, respectively, English language. In the previous stage, they can perfectly be defined as nouns, *id est* complete, independent words. In a similar way, the case endings specialised as adverbial marks, gaining the value of adverbial functions and leaving their genuine inflexional class they belonged to¹.

The terminological difficulties affect the entire domain of *inflexibilia*. The habit of drawing a line between the independent element and the compound element is useful in a synchronic approach, but less useful when dealing with successive linguistic stages. Similar to the question regarding *flexibilia* vs *inflexibilia*, the problem of the chronology is acute: either a fundamental split, valid for the oldest linguistic stages that can be reconstructed, or a result of the linguistic evolution (that might be an evolution from inflected to uninflected words, as seem to suggest the secluded forms, or, vice versa, from uninflected to inflected words, in a continuous process of grammaticalizing the agglutinant elements).

Another distinction, that becomes less and less limpid when going back in time to the linguistic origins, is drawn between syntax and morphology – and this distinction is closely related to the previous one². In the case of compound elements, mostly ante-posed (but not rarely post-posed), it is generally possible to establish the genuine values: this simple fact leads to a supposed itinerary from the status of independent element to the status of compound element. If this is correct, then the next step has to be establishing the border between compound and derivation. All these distinctions are useful at the level of linguistic concomitance, in a given temporal segment. On the other side, in the linguistic process this terminology, together with all its distinction, seems of little relevance.

The terminological looseness has consequences inside the class. In the matter of adverbs, it is interesting the way Harm Pinkster³ deals with. He considers that the adverbs might be seen either as pseudo-categories representing different facets of other parts of speech, or as a distinctive category, composed by words that are semantically and phonetically related to nouns, verbs etc. that never belonged to their paradigm. An adverb like the Latin *articulatim*, that obviously shows a case ending, does not behave like a noun, as long as it cannot be modified by an adjective. From a different point of view, it is possible to elude this terminological difficulty by accepting the fact that “adverb” is a syntactic term and deducing that, e.g., the adverbial role

¹ This hypothesis, handled to the extreme, explains the inflexion as originated from complexes of words; *vide* André Martinet's *L'indo-européen et les "Indo-européens"* (1986), where suffixes are implicitly reinterpreted, being constantly labeled as “particles”.

² This doubt is synthesised by a statement of William Schmalstieg (*Indo-European Linguistics. A new synthesis* Londra 1980): the morphology of a given linguistic stage represents the syntax of the previous linguistic stage.

³ *On Latin Adverbs*, Amsterdam 1972, 63-4.

of a noun determine a special behaviour, apart from the non-adverbial roles. Rudolf Thurneysen⁴ uses the term “uninflected adjectives”, that underlines the adverbial behaviour.

The terminological ambiguity is probably best proved by Hittite, where the linguistic structure includes the category of “pre-verb/postposition”: language with the verb placed at the end of the sentence and with noun values determined by particles that are postponed, Hittite can only offer one single position for those elements that were acknowledged by the linguistic habit as pre-verb and post-noun. Needless to say that in Hittite, as in many other Indo-European languages, there are approximately the same elements used either as pre-verb or postposition.

The terminological difficulties might be confronted by creating new terms, as tried (among others) Paul Friedrich⁵; the notion he used, “locative auxiliaries”, refers to those uninflected words, originally independent, that bring some more precision in the space and time relationship. The term had been previously advanced, independently (as Friedrich states), by V. V. Ivanov, two years before, in 1973; in 1971 Bolinger had created the notion of “adprep”, basically equivalent. The category of locative auxiliaries includes the elements traditionally referred to as adverbs, pre-verbs, prepositions and postpositions, terms that seem to ignore the matter of double value (elements that have the capability of closely determining both the verb and the noun). Friedrich supposes that these elements acted like auxiliaries in Proto-Indo-European, dealing especially with the noun cases and the verbal aspect. These locative auxiliaries could be post-posed or pre-posed; they were usually pre-posed to the nouns, either as mobile units or as parts of rigid compounds: for example the Homeric *prokrossoi*, which is not sustained by a simple **krossoi*. The others, the prepositional mobile units, are quite frequent in Homeric poems, such as *thoas epi neas*; the Homeric pattern of mobile attaching is well attested. These elements were attached to verbs in various degrees of mobility: direct pre-verbation; independent pre-verb, that was immediately preceding the verb; independent pre-verb, that was separated from the verb by one or more words; post-posed to the verb, either directly or separated by one or more words (even placed in different lines in poetry).

Another possible approach of the terminological difficulties is the indifferent one that admits the impossibility of drawing a line between these categories. This is, among others, Brugmann’s attitude, who noticed⁶ that, from a syntactic point of view, the main difficulty in setting demarcation consists in the fact that frequently in the same temporal level these words manifest manifold values, or are accepted as being in transition from one category to another. Brugmann used the terminology of his time (that is still frequently used), id est he labelled as adverbs even the prepositions and adverbs, whenever the phrase is not precisely determined. The adverb, in a limited way of being understood, is a label for those words used for closely determining the verb, including the verb “to be”. In a similar manner, from ancient linguistic times, the adverb was closely connected to adjectives and to other adverbs, showing a syntactic relationship to the adjective: the adverb is closely connected to a verb (or adjective, or adverb), just as an adjective is closely connected to a noun.

⁴ *A Grammar of Old Irish*, Dublin 1961, § 361.

⁵ *Proto-Indo-European Syntax*, Montana, 1975.

⁶ *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*, Strassburg, vol. II 2, 1911, § 551.

The adverbs in restricted meaning are best related to prepositions; the special name of this category is justified by the fact that many adverbs show a special relationship to certain nouns, e.g. Latin *prope urbem*. This sort of relationship may appear even regarding elements that have never been adverbs, such as Latin *patris causa*. “Primary adverbs” are usually understood as the adverbs that have an obscure history, id est those that do not reveal themselves inside a given language and can not be decomposed: this seems to be the only acceptable definition. The same label might be used for particles too, except that for particles it is usually expected a less precise meaning: the border between primary adverbs and particles remains the domain of subjectivity. Among the attempts of defining particles is to be mentioned one made in negative terms, that globally illustrates the terminological difficulties⁷: particles are neither prepositions, nor postpositions, nor conjunctions; they can determine either a part, or the whole of the phrase. This definition does not state whether, from the standpoint of the author, is equally impossible the equivalence particle/pre-verb; it does not state what was the meaning of term “conjunction” (only the subordinatory or all of them, including the coordinative conjunctions). One of the rare definitions of the Greek particles is owed to Denniston and it opens his study⁸ upon the stylistic utilisation of this both delicate and strong linguistic instrument. Denniston sees the particle as the expression of an approach, or of a logical relationship, or of an emotional state of mind. He considers the particle representative of a relatively recent stage in the development of expression, as their use presupposed the self-consciousness. Some of the items Denniston labelled as particles are elements that can be analysed, originated in other parts of speech: *alla*, *toi* (which he considered to belong to the same semantic and functional level as some words in contemporary English: *well*, *come*, *now*, *why*)⁹.

Highly interesting is the resumption of Denniston’s study on the basis of the New Testament’ texts, accomplished by Margaret Thrall¹⁰. The particles used in the New Testament are significant for their use in *koine*, that is different in several aspects from the classical usage. Regarding other *koine* texts, the New Testament offers the advantage of length and of various subjects, that allows a flexible and elegant expression; on the other side, these texts are less subordinate to the patterns of classical models (in classical times, the particles are more frequently used and display a larger inventory). One of the answers the author gives refers to the use of Greek language by persons with different linguistic traditions, whose genuine languages rarely used particles. The decline of the particle was already real since the times of the New

⁷ G. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane*, Paris, 1963.

⁸ *The Greek Particles*, Oxford, 1954.

⁹ Labéy, in his handbook that appeared in 1950 (*Manuel des particules grecques*, Paris.), before the final edition of Denniston’s *Particles* (that offers a considerably changed version of his previous study, published in 1934) globally admits Denniston’s classification, but clearly delimits the subordinatory conjunctions. The most interesting personal idea of Labéy upon particles has to be noticed because of its originality: he believes that the particles represent a system that is comparable to the modern system of punctuation marks. It is obvious that such a system is useful only outside the oral level of linguistic communication, where the intonation itself announces the nuances. In Labéy vision, particles may represent a “strong punctuation”, marking the separation between sentences, or a “weak punctuation”, being shattered along the sentence and possibly confused with the adverbs.

¹⁰ *Greek Particles in the New Testament*, Leiden, 1962.

Comedy; the combinations of different particles were more and more rare and were still in use only in the frame of classical models.

No matter which of the proposed models is more plausible, the testimonies of the historical languages attest the existence of a group of words that have only one form and which contrast to the words that are heads of series, words with multiple forms, with paradigms, that are registered by dictionaries as one single item. All the words that do not enter this final category are negatively registered as *inflexibilia*, term that covers a mass of words that, in a synchronic level, admits only one common trait: their unique form, that usually can not be analysed or, at least, is considered not to be analysed. This class of *inflexibilia* also gathers some items (words) that are on their half road: they can still be semantically or formally analysed but have only one form; these secluded elements are in fact parts of the *flexibilia*, as long as they belong to the system, even if they left behind the paradigmatic series.

Inside this group of *inflexibilia* there are in use several classifications that are obviously syntactic: elements with adverbial values, elements with conjunction values, with prepositional values etc., that might curtly be called adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions. These have to be considered from a syntactic point of view, as long as the morphology has no valid instruments to distinguish them and can only recognise the various stages of the process that leded them to the status of uninflected words and, nevertheless, unanalysable words. This fact leads to the conclusion that the analysable *inflexibilia* represent a relative category, which is easily enriched by the natural linguistic process and, in the same time, by the improving of our knowledge about the history of words.

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Scattering Beans at *SETSUBUN*

Shunsuke Okunishi

Introduction

The Japanese custom of scattering beans at *Setsubun* is similar to *Lemuria*, practiced in ancient Rome in order to drive away the spirits of the dead. Publius Ovidius Naso states the following in his work *Fasti*, written in the first century after Christ:

“When from that day the Evening Star shall thrice have shown his beauteous face, and thrice the vanquished stars shall have retreated before Phoebus, there will be celebrated an olden rite, the nocturnal Lemuria: it will bring offerings to the silent ghosts. The year was formerly shorter, and the pious rites of purification (*februa*) were unknown, and thou, two-headed Janus, was not the leader of the months. Yet even then people brought gifts to the ashes of the dead, as their due, and the grandson paid his respects to the tomb of his buried grandsire. It was the month of May, so named after our forefathers (*maiores*), and it still retains part of the ancient custom. When midnight has come and lends silence to sleep, and dogs and all ye varied fowls are hushed, the worshipper who bears the olden rite in mind and fears the gods arises; no knots constrict his feet; and he makes a sign with his thumb in the middle of his closed fingers, lest in his silence an unsubstantial shade should meet him. And after washing his hands clean in spring water, he turns, and first he receives black beans and throws them, he says: ‘These I cast; but with these beans I redeem me and mine.’ This he says nine times, without looking back; the shade is thought to gather the beans, and to follow unseen behind. Again he touches water, and clashes Temesan bronze, and asks the shade to go out of his house. When he has said nine times, “Ghosts of my fathers, go forth!” he looks back and thinks that he has duly performed the sacred rites.”¹

The modern writer Ōgai Mori compared this festival to scattering beans at *Setsubun*. In 1909, he mentioned at the end of his story entitled “Exorcism”, published in volume 4, no. 5 of the review *Tōa no hikari*, that there had been a similar custom practiced in ancient Rome. Frazer had pointed it out long before, but only in the second edition of *The Golden Bough*, which means that he learned about the similarity only between 1890 and 1900, but I do not know for sure whether Ōgai Mori read Frazer’s book.

1. The Setting of *Setsubun*

The rituals, customs and other folk events, which form the framework of certain culture cannot be considered independently. They are interconnected, in space and time, to other cultural phenomena, thus engendering the respective culture. It is therefore very difficult to deal

¹ Publius Ovidius Naso: 1929, pp. 419-454.

with folkloric culture without taking into account all of its aspects. In other words, one can neither explain nor understand an event unless one knows the connections between folklore and its context. *Setsubun* is no exception.

Setsubun, a complex cultural event, full of meaning, can be understood only within Japan's culture as a whole. In the beginning I would like to introduce only some aspects that I consider absolutely necessary.

Japan consists of a long and narrow archipelago, extending from northeast to southeast, with a latitudinal difference of 20 degrees. Most of the country is covered with high mountains. It can be best described as a unified country where the feudal system based on semi-independent clans lasted until the second half of the 19th century. The combination of the natural landscape with such a history resulted in the use of a single standard language – Japanese. Nevertheless, the dialectal differences were quite strong. Unless the standard language was used, people could not understand one another. I mean that even within traditional culture, the regional differences can be so striking that they themselves can be looked upon as an appropriate material for a comparative folk study.

In ancient times the main occupation was agriculture. Although there were people who lived on hunting, fishing or trade, Japan was considered an agrarian country until the 19th century because over 70% of its people dealt with agriculture. Among the agricultural products, rice was particularly important. In my opinion, the importance of rice in the traditional life of the Japanese was by far greater than that of wheat and bread in the West. At the same time, both alcoholic beverages distilled from rice came to fulfill the same functions like wine and beer in the West. Moreover, until the Edo era², even taxes were paid according to the crop harvested on paddy fields. That is why, from the traditional point of view, Japan follows the rules of an agrarian society, strongly dependent upon rice.

Besides rice, there were cereals, vegetables, fruits, fish and marine products, fowls, etc. (except for mammalian meat), as well as basic seasonings, such as *miso*³ and soy sauce, besides salt, *sake* or vinegar. Both *miso* and soy sauce are prepared through the fermentation of soybeans. Mention should also be made of *tōfu*⁴ that is also prepared from soybeans, a basic source of protein, equivalent to milk in the West.

Farming in Japan seems to have been divided into three parts: *yama* (mountains), *no* (plains) and *sato* (villages). *Yama* stands for mountainous regions, with difficult living conditions, as they are usually covered with forests. *Sato* represents the areas inhabited by people, while the slopes between mountains and villages are called *no*, and they correspond to plains. Though we call it a “plain”, it is but a gentle slope at the foot of the mountain. When passing from mountains to plains, we often come across gushing springs that are considered to be “the water of life”. Such springs are sometimes called “healing water” or “Kōbō's water”, Kōbō being a well-known Buddhist saint met with in legends. As the water of such springs is highly regarded, people come from far away to drink it. These areas have also become renowned for *sake* brewing.

In traditional farming societies, there is a strong belief in the “corn spirit”, and Japan is no

² 1600-1868.

³ Fermented soybean paste.

⁴ Soybean curd.

exception. Here, such a spirit is called either “the God of the Mountain” or “the God of the Rice-paddy”. I think it is not necessary to explain why it is called “the God of the Rice-paddy”, but it is called “the God of the Mountain” because, going downstream, he crosses the plain and descends into the villages. I mean to say that mountains represent another world, somewhere above the earth, and between this world and the village, there lies the plain. People used to welcome the gods who descended to the tops of the mountains or trees in spring and to send them away in autumn, when they were said to leave our world. Sometimes such gods were welcomed at the very border between our world and the World Beyond, namely at the border between the mountain and the village. Some other times, they were accompanied down to villages and from there they were sent back to their world. This is considered to be the original form of festivals. In most cases gods are welcomed, on such occasions, with a procession of allegorical devices called *koshi* (“palanquins”) or *dashi* (“floats”), which are thought to be their means of transport. While there are shrines dedicated to gods in every village or town, like churches in the West, the most authentic ones are usually located in small woods.

Beliefs in such farming societies are interwoven with ancestor worship and with the Cult of the Sun, not to overlook natural phenomena such as rain, thunder, wind, which have a strong connection to agriculture. All these elements, subsequently influenced by the advent of Buddhism, make up contemporary folk culture. For example, over one thousand years ago, alongside Buddhism, the custom of cremation was introduced, and then generalized. Nowadays, cremation is held in special places, and the ritual is called *nobeokuri*. Etymologically, this word means “to lead the souls of the dead around the plains (*no*)”. Ancient tombs were erected on the slopes of the mountains, i.e., in the plains, and many cemeteries are nowadays located on such slopes, so that one may look down at the village from the heights.

The annual festival called *Setsubun* takes place against the background of such a type of folk culture. In order to understand the festival better, we need to learn more about elements connected to the calendar system. Japan traditionally used the lunar-solar calendar originating in China. This calendar was made up of 29 or 30 day months, and once in 19 years the intercalary month appeared 7 times. The Meiji government took over the Gregorian calendar in 1872, a calendar that is in use in many countries nowadays. The 1st of January 1872 corresponded to the 3rd of the 12th month in the lunar-solar calendar. Most of the annual festivals, which had taken place according to the old calendar until then, gradually came to be held according to the Gregorian calendar, that is, one month later.

Due to the fact that the intercalary month appeared 7 times every 19 years, there were periods of time when the succession of the seasons did not comply with the calendar. For this reason, there arose troubles as to planning farming. The Japanese adopted Chinese units devised in order to ensure the compatibility between the movement of the sun and the succession of the seasons. These units were called *sekki*, and one *sekki* stood for a 15-day period. The year was divided into 24 *sekki*, which means there were two *sekki* in a month, while three months made up a season. As 15 days represented one *sekki*, 24 *sekki* made up a 360-day year, which means it was 5 days short of one Gregorian year. With the development of astronomy, the position of the ecliptic sun was taken into account and a year came to be divided into 24 units. Considering the vernal equinox as a starting point, there was created a gap every other 15 degrees. According to the speed of the sun, 6 *sekki* of one year came to be made up of 16 days.

Having the *sekki* as a common ground, the beginning of seasons were called *risshun* (“the first spring day”), *rikka* (“the first summer day”), *risshū* (“the first autumn day”), *ritto* (“the first winter day”), while the days before each season were called *setsubun*. Originally, *setsubun* appeared four times a year. As a unit (*sekki*) represented the turning point between seasons, there should have been festivals corresponding to these traditional divisions, but as I have already mentioned, the structure of *sekki* had changed along with the modification of the lunar-solar calendar. There are festivals nowadays which are probably not held on the days they took place in ancient times, which makes the situation rather confused. For instance, even the word *setsubun* has come to refer only to the day before *risshun* (“the first spring day”), and the festival *Setsubun* signifies “parting from winter and welcoming spring”.

According to the Gregorian calendar, *Setsubun* is held on February 3rd or 4th. However, because this festival took place around the 1st of the 1st month according to the lunar-solar calendar, it was eventually combined with the events held both at the turn of the year and with those on the New Year. After the Gregorian calendar was adopted, it is hard to say whether *Setsubun* was separated from the rituals performed in the moments mentioned above. As I am going to show, the rituals pertaining to *Setsubun* can be performed either at the end or at the beginning of the year, depending on regions, but there are cases when they are held separately.

2. Scattering Soybeans

The festivals welcoming the arrival of spring are outstanding events in most cultures in the northern hemisphere. In the places where people’s life almost completely depends on the existence of farmable plants, it is quite natural that the moment when these begin to grow should be paid due attention.

Scattering beans is one of the best-known rituals found in *Setsubun* festival. It is called *mameuchi* or *mamemaki* in Japanese. Nowadays, famous artists and sportsmen are invited to temples and shrines in order to chant: “Out with demons! In with good luck!” (*Fuku wa uchi, oni wa soto!*) while scattering soybeans towards the participants in the festival. With their right hands, they take soybeans out of the boxes they hold in their left hands. The participants try to catch as many beans as they can, as it is said that the person who eats such beans will be lucky.

The demons mentioned above are a kind of devils. As the Japanese language uses Chinese characters that were a kind of pictographs or ideograms devised more than 2000 years ago, the word *oni* (“devil” or “demon”) can also be written in such characters, called *kanji*. The *kanji* depicting the word *oni* suggests the shape of a man having a grotesquely huge head. Resembling the image of a corpse in decay, one can easily imagine the inhabitants of the Hades and the spirits of the dead. According to Buddhist belief, those who committed sins in their previous life are doomed to hell, and as they are tortured, they also become demons. Starting from the image of such demons, people have come to imagine them in great detail. The demon at the *Rashōmon* gate stands for the traditional Japanese image representative of demons. The *Rashōmon* gate, which is to be found in the southern extremity of Kyōto, is said to have been the place where devils often made their apparition. The legend of the hero, who tries to kill a demon there, is a theme that has been often explored in literature and arts. The picture features the samurai who has come to the *Rashōmon* gate to destroy the demon, but the latter is ready to attack the samurai.

The demon in the picture has the medium stature of a devil. It is not wearing clothes, but it has a loincloth made of tiger leather. Its muscles are protruding, and its body is sparsely covered with bristles, while the color of its skin is red or blue (or sometimes white or black). The demon does not belong to our world. Its every hair is erect; it has horns on its forehead, while a fang grows on its split mouth. Its eyes are pointed and staring. All of these features together reveal its wild nature. Generally speaking, devils have but three fingers and three toes. The image of a devil depicted like this is said to have been influenced by Buddhism, but I do not think it is the right supposition. The wild nature, the wide-open still eyes, the split mouth, the protruding muscles make us think of a swelling corpse that goes into decay. A corpse will often turn into red or another color.

People in ancient times must have known that corpses change color. Originally, supernatural beings in the “mountains” were considered a real threat, and people held them in awe. As they were thought to be able to bring both good luck and bad luck, they were deified and worshiped. Their different individual appearances could lead us to believe that they are regarded distinctly in different cultures, but I wonder whether the image of such fearful creatures did not overlap with that of decomposing corpses.

I have mentioned that nowadays the ritual of scattering beans usually takes place at temples and shrines, but the ritual was originally held at home. In such cases the head of the family, wearing an unusual mask, played the main role, as it was he who scattered beans, while children would pick them.

The one who scatters beans is called *toshiotoko* (“the man of the year”), irrespective of the place where the ritual is performed. He is called like this because he is considered lucky to have been chosen to play such a prominent part in that year. Priests at temples and shrines play the role of *toshiotoko* on New Year. The span of time between the end of the old year and the beginning of the new year (*toshiokoshi*) is a taboo period during which the *Toshigami* (“the God of the Year”) comes to visit every family. For this reason, people decorate their houses and take part in various rituals. As the God descends upon trees, in many regions, the gates or the main rooms are decorated with pine tree branches. The old fire in the fireplace is put out and new fire is lit, vigil is kept on the last night of the year, and God and Man share the same food. The food is different from the usual one. I will not go into details now, but I would like to point out that the old traditional food and practices gather the whole family around the table. The one who directs the decoration of the house and the preparation of food is *toshiotoko*. The person who performs the ritual of scattering beans was originally the same person who directed the rituals on New Year. Thus, it is easy to understand the close connection between *Setsubun* and the New Year. I have already mentioned the complicated changes the calendar system has undergone, but it is however easy to infer that *Setsubun*, the ritual of welcoming spring (*haru mukae*), originally took place around the New Year, and it overlapped with the rituals at the turn of the year. Some of these rituals were combined, while others have been transformed.

The chant of the *toshiotoko* – “Out with demons! In with good luck!” – is heard even if the ritual of scattering beans takes place at home. According to folk belief, demons are thus driven away because beans have the power to destroy their eyes. In some areas, as in Yamagata Prefecture for instance, soybeans are scattered while people are chanting: “Out with demons! Their eyes be crushed!” This may be connected to the belief in the existence of evil eye, i.e. the

superstition according to which the eye can enjoy magical power. This superstition is found all over the world, and Japan is no exception. We can speak about people with devilish eyes, not to mention the fact that demons never lack such eyes. Demons appear in legends, such as in those that refer to the gorgons in ancient Greek mythology. As I already mentioned when I quoted from *Fasti*, beans were thrown over the shoulder, without looking back. Before throwing the beans, the person made a sign with his thumb in the middle of his closed fingers, the gesture being called *la mano fica* in Italian. *La mano fica* is considered to be a famous amulet against the evil eye. Ancient Romans used to scatter beans without looking back because they feared evil eye. This custom is reminiscent of Perseus who, without looking straight at Medusa's evil eye but at her image reflected in the shield, managed to defeat her.

Ōgai Mori writes that Japanese also used to throw beans over the shoulder, but the background of his assumption is not clear. It seems they are not practicing it nowadays. There are however other aspects connected to the belief in evil eye that we should take into consideration. During *Setsubun*, besides the ritual of scattering beans, people also practice the custom of thrusting a holly twig into the head of a fried sardine. It is said that demons will no longer draw near because they fear the holly and hate the smell of fried sardines. There are areas where this custom of warding off evil spirits is called "the thrust into the Demon's eye". I will broach the subject of fuming demons away later, but I would like to point out now that they dread the thorny holly because this plant resembles very sharp objects. Demons are afraid lest the holly should damage their eyes. Bamboo amulets are used instead of holly in areas where this plant does not grow (e.g., the southern part of Wakayama prefecture). There are other areas, such as Yamanashi prefecture, where *mekago* ("openwork bamboo baskets") are hung on rods at the entrance of the houses.

The word *mekago* literally means "eye-basket". The openwork bamboo basket is made from thin bamboo sticks woven roughly, and it is used as a container for fruit or for relatively big objects. The gaps between the horizontal and vertical interlaces are holes that look like eyes, and that is why such baskets are considered to have a lot of eyes.

In many parts of Japan, on February 8th, in order to drive away the one-eyed monster, people hang openwork bamboo baskets. The one-eyed monster is considered to be a mountain creature with one eye and one leg. As it fears the basket with many eyes, it runs away. The legend of this one-eyed monster is known all over the world. The famous Japanese folklorist Kunio Yanagita assumes that once, on the occasion of the festival, a Shintō priest must have crushed one of his own eyes as a sacrificial offering. Since the Chinese characters depicting "minister" and "wise" come from pictographs, they are thought to be the picture of crushing one eye, so I cannot deny Kunio Yanagita's assumption. The connection between the monarch, ministers and wise men is, in a way, the same as that between gods and priests.

In Koshikijima, an isolated island in Kagoshima prefecture, it is believed that *Toshigami* ("The God of the Year") brings gifts to children, just as Santa Claus brings presents. The gifts are called *toshidama* and they are, in fact, round rice cakes. The person who plays the part of the God of the Year either wears a mask or a basket over his face. The basket plays the role of a mask, and thus it has come to symbolize God. When welcoming spring, people put offerings in such a basket or in an object similar to it and hang it in a high place.

3. *Tsuina* (“The Year-end Exorcism”)

Performed by famous people at temples and shrines, *Setsubun* is quite a recent annual event as compared to *Tsuina* or *Oni yarai* (“the demon purge”) which was observed and practiced at the Imperial Court. The latter is still practiced as a Buddhist ceremony on New Year, under different names.

A long time ago, the following type of *Tsuina* was practiced at Kamedo Tenmangū shrine in Tokyo: at six o’clock in the afternoon people would light a bonfire in front of the shrine, while two persons, wearing blue or red demon masks with two horns and four eyes, would perform a *kagura* dance. The bodies of the performers were covered with monkey fur coats. They would rest on walking sticks with stag horns at the top end. A Shintō priest would come out to meet the demons, communicate with them, and hit them with *onusa*.⁵ Another five priests would wave *go-ō* sticks (sticks having a charm called *go’ō-hōin*, at the top extremity) and chase the demons away with a prayer.

It is said the ritual of the demon purge at Kamedo Tenmagū shrine is based on the ritual performed at Dazaifu Tenmangū shrine in Kyūshū. The ritual of driving the demons away is called “demon fumigation”, and it is still practiced here nowadays. This ritual, which takes place on January 7th, is not in fact *Setsubun*. The persons wearing demon masks are confined in a building and are fumed with burning branches of green pine tree. People are divided into groups: those participating in fumigating and, on the other hand, those who give a helpful hand. The ceremony turns into a kind of mock fight. Finally, the demons are fumigated and people circumambulate the building to the rhythm of drums. The priests throw beans at the demons and hit them with five-colored wands, called *ujō*. The persons who have taken part in the fumigating ritual stir the smoke with fans and throw ashes at the demons.

I would like to point out that Tenmangū shrines are dedicated to the famous scholar Sugawara no Michizane, who was deified and is considered, at the same time, the God of Thunder. It goes without saying that in Japan the God of Thunder is believed to be the protector of farming labor.

Tsuina is performed in many places, with unessential differences between regions, but the common elements that make up this ritual are of a special interest from the folkloric standpoint. Among these mention should be made of: the fire ritual, the dialogue, the mock fight, the chase of the demons and the circumambulation of the building, the throwing of objects at demons and their hitting with wands, etc.

To go deeper into the meaning of *Tsuina*, Kanera Ichijō, who dealt with the rituals at the Imperial Court, wrote the following in the work entitled *Kujikongen*⁶ (1422), in an article referring to the events held in December:

“*Tsuina* means purging away the noxious vapor for a whole year. The Demon is in fact Fang-hsiang Shih (*Hōsō Shi*). He has four eyes and wears a terrifying mask, carrying a spear and a shield. He is accompanied by twenty persons, who play the part of children and who are dressed in plain

⁵ A purifying wand.

⁶ *The Origins of the Court Ceremonies*.

dark-blue kimonos. They circumambulate the four gates of the Imperial Palace. The ritual started in December, the second year of Keiun era.⁷ In this year the people in China suffered from a terrible pestilence.”

The second year of the Keiun era was mistaken for the third year. I will focus attention upon Volume 3 of the work *Shoku Nihongi*,⁸ the article of December in the third year of Keiun era, during the reign of Emperor Mommu:

“In this year a pestilence burst out all over the country and many people died. That is why we made, for the first time, a clay image of a cow head and exorcized it.”

In the first Japanese literary encyclopedia, *Kokon Yōrankō*, which came out in the middle of the 19th century, Hirokata Yashiro wrote:

“In ancient times, before entering into the dead of winter, people used to make two clay images for *Setsubun*. One of them represented a cow and the other a child. They put them at the gates of the Imperial Palace in order to expel the cold and they would keep vigil over the images the day and the night before spring set in. [...] Nowadays people think that *Setsubun* and *Tsuina* is one and the same thing, but in ancient times they were completely distinct events. *Tsuina* was practiced only at the end of the year and not on other days. The ritual of scattering beans at *Setsubun* started in the Middle Ages and it originates in the ritual of scattering “red pills and the five cereals”, as it is mentioned in *Hou Han-shu*.”⁹

It becomes thus clear that *Setsubun* and *Tsuina* were two distinct practices in ancient times, but the difference between them disappeared. In order to drive away pestilences, at the end of the year people would make a clay image of a cow head. The ritual unexpectedly changed into a spring event. The custom of making a clay image of a cow died away long ago, but there are still echoes of it in some regions. As I have already mentioned, the stick with which the priest at Kamedo Tenmangū shrine hits the demon has a *go'ō* at the top end. This charm is called “the treasury seal of *go'ō*”. Nowadays one can find such a charm at shrines. During the Edo era, peddlers used to sell them. *Go'ō* is a mysterious medicine extracted from cow liver. In Chinese traditional medicine, the stones in the cow's gall bladder were used as medicine, the word *go'ō* literally meaning “cow's yellow”, a homonymous word to *Go'ō* meaning “the King of Cows”. Furthermore, according to Buddhist belief, the Cow-headed Heavenly King representing the Illuminated Buddha, the guardian God in Buddhist temples, is considered to be the incarnation of the Physician of Souls. Tradition is often difficult to explain, but the clay image of a cow and the stick having *go'ō* at the top end must have been related to each other. I would like to point out that vows and offerings brought to cow images were general customs in antiquity, especially in Egyptian and Mithraic religions, and that is why we cannot deny the existence of such traditional customs as that of making up clay images representing cows.

Hirokata Yashiro avers that, according to the classical Chinese dictionary, the word *mameuchi* (“throwing” or “scattering beans”) comes from Chinese. It is true that many aspects of culture have penetrated into Japan from the continent, and thus their origin was often ascribed to China. It is generally believed that this case is no exception. To be more exact, Yashiro's

⁷ 705.

⁸ *The Sequel of the History of Japan* (798) (i.e. The History after Nihon Shoki - 720).

⁹ 1/931.

article sounds like that:

“Fang-hsiang Shih was accompanied by many servants, children and women. They were carrying bows of peach wood, thorny arrows, and earthen drums. They would shoot with the bows and beat the drums. They would also scatter red pills and the five cereals.”

This passage is a quotation from *Hang-jiuyi* which is cited in a gloss to *Liyi-zhi* (“Part of Rituals”) of *Houhang-shu* (“Book of the Later Han”). Since the book *Hang-jiuyi* was written by Wei Hung, who was a yilang, i.e., master of ceremonies of Guang Wu Di, the first emperor of the Later Han, this passage describes the ritual about the first century A.D.

In this article, Fang-hsiang Shih does not appear defeated; on the contrary, he seems to attack, being in the opposite position of that of the demon in the ritual *Tsuina*, as it is known in Japan later. In *Kujikongen*, Fang-hsiang Shih is also described as circumambulating the Imperial Court while practicing exorcism, but there is no reason for us to consider him the object of a purifying ritual.

Even if during the first century the ritual of scattering red pills and the five cereals was practiced as a way of exorcising, it is impossible to believe that such an imperial ritual should have been transmitted to Japan, which was not yet united as a single nation. On the other hand, such practices were no longer mentioned in the subsequent Chinese documents referring to Fang-hsiang Shih. For instance, in the Tang Dynasty¹⁰ institutional history book entitled *Tongdian*, in the article “Danuo” in volume 133, there are details about the way Fang-hsiang Shih’s companions perform the ritual of purification within the precincts of the palace. The description is concrete and it is quite clear that Fang-hsiang Shih was wearing a mask, but the ritual of scattering red pills and the five cereals is not at all mentioned. A couple of hundred years ago, when the Japanese started making clay cow images and practicing the *Tsuina* ritual, there must have existed in China the ritual of purifying through scattering red pills and the five cereals, but when *Tsuina* started in Japan, such a ritual was not performed at the Chinese Imperial Court.

We find the earliest record about Fang-hsiang Shih in the chapter on military bureaucracy of Zhou-li,¹¹ which is assumed to describe the rites in the Chou (“Zhou”) Dynasty. Fang-hsiang Shih is described as follows:

“His body was covered with bearskin. He had four golden-yellow eyes. Over his black clothes, he would wear an olden red skirt. He would carry a tasseled spear and a shield.”

As to the meaning of this disguise, it goes without saying that the wearing of bearskin is closely connected to bear’s totem, spread in the northern part of the Eurasian continent, a theory sustained by the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius. There are many aspects of real interest here, but I will only discuss the “golden and four-eyed” item.

As classical Chinese is very precise, sometimes the meanings of the words are not clear, because they are not stated concretely. There are no doubts as to the meaning of the words “golden” and “four-eyed”, but it is not so simple to imagine what Fang-hsiang Shih looked like. As I have already stated, in the subsequent records he is featured wearing a mask. That means that “golden” is probably the color of the mask.

In 1986 many bronze images, estimated to be about 3000 years old, were unearthed in

¹⁰ 616-904.

¹¹ *Rites of Zhou*.

Sanxingdui, an archaeological site in Sichuan, situated on the upper part of the Yangtze River. Included among them are upper halves of bodies and heads of men, some of which wear masks of sheet gold covering the middle of their faces. Those gold masks have two holes for eyes and two for eyebrows, which may be regarded as “four-eyed”. Though the culture there does not resemble perfectly that of Yan-Chao, which belongs to the middle part of the Yellow River, those bronze figures and masks can help us imagine what “the four-eyed masked” looked like in ancient times.

The masks with two eyes above and two on the sides came to be considered “four-eyed”. In order to understand the “four-eyed”, we had better analyze the mask. The mask is not provided with four eyes; it has only two, and the person wearing it also has two eyes. This doubling of the eyes is exactly what suggests one of the bronze statues discovered at Sanxingdui.

The ritual of *Tsuina* is unlikely to be practiced in China any longer, but the concept of “four-eyed” is still in use, although its meaning has changed little by little. For instance, the phrase *Siyan-nu* (“four-eyed woman”) is never used for a pregnant woman, nor is the phrase *Siyan-xiang* (“four-eyed man”) used for her husband, as neither is four-eyed. The pregnant woman comes to have four eyes together with those of the fetus. In brief, “four-eyed” has a taboo meaning: two beings in a body.

The phrase “four-eyed” recalls the mythological dog in India or Iran. In India, the dog that waited upon the King of Hell, *Yama*, was four-eyed. Such a dog is also found in Greek mythology. As it is closely connected to Hell, namely to the World of the Dead, it is a taboo subject. Such a superstition has also survived in Japan and that is why one cannot breed a four-eyed dog. If a child found a brown little dog with spots above its eyes, his parents would forbid him to keep it.

Leaving details aside, I think that “four-eyed” suggests the taboo condition of one body in which two persons live. I mean it symbolizes a certain “threshold” in human existence. The custom of wearing a mask during the *Tsuina* ritual seems to bear the same meaning. I have already mentioned the wearing of masks at the ritual of scattering beans at home, and in most cases the *toshiotoko* (“the man of the year”) at temples and shrines also wears demon masks.

In contemporary China we come across many customs reminiscent of the origin of this superstition, but the old *Tsuina* has changed, and there are few regions where exorcizing plays with folkloric connotations are still performed. It is no longer a religious ceremony or a masked mythological play, but a ritual combined with dances meant to symbolically expel disasters and to invite good luck into the house.

This festival has been the subject of several recent studies, and some of the results have already been published. Significant are the wearing of masks, the fight with the demon, a certain kind of parade, the performance requiring certain skills on the part of the performers, the groups made up within the communities, etc., but I must admit that researchers have not yet gone beyond the stage of introducing these elements. Based on the few old records available, there are some comparative studies regarding the Japanese and the Korean *Tsuina*, but I think that this ritual will receive more serious analysis and interpretation. As far as I know, no practices resembling the ritual of scattering beans have yet been mentioned.

4. Back to the Ritual of Scattering Beans

It seems that around the first century, during the *Tsuina* performed in China there was a purifying ritual by dint of scattering “red pills” and “the five cereals”. I have already mentioned that this ritual is called *mameuchi* (“scattering beans”) in Japan. After that time, there are no more records in China regarding such a ritual. Moreover, a *tsuina* similar to that performed by Fang-hsiang Shih is no longer mentioned in the Chinese documents around the 10th century, which means that it was no longer practiced. On the other hand, it is said that *Tsuina* was performed for the first time in Japan in 789 and that is why it is believed that a practice similar to that of Fang-hsiang Shih might have been transmitted to Japan during the 100 years of the 9th century, but it is difficult to believe that Japan could have taken over the ritual of purification through scattering “red pills” and “the five cereals” practiced several hundreds years earlier.

Besides, it is not clear what the “red pills” are. It is thought they are *azuki beans*, because they are red and round and are scattered together with the five cereals. *Azuki beans* are extremely important elements belonging to Japanese folkloric culture. In Japan, *azuki beans* mixed with sugar represent an essential ingredient for the traditional Japanese cakes, which look like jam, and which are held at high esteem. Moreover, rice cakes are still served on festive days. They are prepared from glutinous rice, colored with *azuki beans*. Especially on January 15th, which represents the end of the New Year festivals, Japanese people eat *azuki beans* and rice gruel. On the same day a bonfire called *sagichō* or *tondo* is kindled, green bamboo wood being also used. It is considered that firecrackers originate in this bonfire.

In the 1425 article on the aspects of social life and the customs in the 15th century, included in the important historical document called *Kanmon Nikki*,¹² it is written that “the practice of scattering beans in order to hold the demon in check is a rather modern one”. Gosukōin, the emperor’s nephew, considered that the ritual of scattering beans was performed by aristocratic classes, alongside a similar custom practiced by Fang-hsiang Shih. The word “modern” is not explained concretely, but it cannot have come before the 14th century.

If we take into consideration the fact that *Tsuina* ritual, similar to the one performed by Fang-hsiang Shih, was practiced only at temples and shrines, we could infer that it was a ritual belonging only to aristocracy and to the ruling classes. On the other hand, I have already mentioned that common people used to perform the ritual of scattering beans at home. In my opinion, it is more natural to consider that the aristocracy took over common people’s customs than to hold that such customs were taken over from foreign people, supposed to have had only a few records at that point several hundreds years old.

On the other hand, in the diaries of the samurai families in the 15th century, it is recorded that during *Setsubun* scattering dried chestnuts beside soybeans was practiced. Chestnuts have also been very important elements in Japanese traditional culture and they are eaten on New Year even nowadays. Moreover, the custom of eating chestnuts on September 9th is supposed to have spread because on this date there takes place one of the five most important feasts assigned by the Shogunate during the Edo period. Taking into account the Chinese character, “dried chestnut” means in fact “pounded chestnut”. Chestnuts are dried, then the shells and peels are taken off and

¹² *The Chronicle of Things Seen and Heard*.

the pulp is pounded. The word can also mean “the chestnut of victory”. Thus, chestnuts are eaten on special festive occasions. There are many such popular interpretations, but I must admit that most of them are just puns.

In the north-eastern part of Japan, archaeological excavations in 1992 revealed, at Sannaimaruyama, ruins belonging to the wonderful Jōmon culture.¹³ Among the ruins there are the traces of a building erected on six huge chestnut pillars with the diameter of more than one meter. People lived here for more than 1500 years, and on the waste heaps, huge quantities of chestnut shells were found. An analysis of their DNA determined that people at that time used to plant chestnut trees, which number among the oldest trees in Japan. What is still more important is the fact that agriculture started on mountainous plots of land and not on damp lowlands.

There are many folk cultures in which beans are considered to be an extremely important element. For instance, there are countries in Europe where people eat on Christmas and Epiphany cakes containing beans then used to predict the future. Japanese people eat soybeans at *Setsubun* or roast beans in the hearth in a way reminiscent of various possibilities of fortune telling.

The end of the old year as well as the beginning of the new year, the festivals which take place at the turn of the year or at the turning point between seasons are all occasions when Japanese welcome the spirits of gods or of ancestors. On such festive days, Japanese do not eat common food, but old traditional food. If we consider the fact that Europeans eat traditional food on Christmas and on New Year, it is easy to understand the Japanese custom as well. Among traditional Japanese foods for festive occasions are chestnuts, soybeans and rice cakes cooked with *azuki beans*.

Is the practice of scattering beans at *Setsubun* not an offering to the deities who descend among people? The ritual of scattering beans is performed by “the man of the year” who fills a box with soybeans and then scatters them. This box is 1.8 liters in volume. The box is square and made of wood. Before Edo era, taxes were paid in rice, as a rule, and such a box contained the daily quantity of rice necessary to four persons. Rice, the traditional staple food, is more important to Japanese than bread to Europeans, and that is why this container often appears in festivals related to agriculture. As the food offerings to deities are sometimes put in such boxes, they have important folkloric connotations. The Chinese character depicting “beans”, namely the pictogram, does not resemble the image of this vegetable, but that of a container with high legs. In my opinion it was used as a container to put the god's offerings in. I cannot point out any document referring to why the pictogram of this container has got the meaning of “beans”, but I think no further explanations are needed.

¹³ 10.000 – 300 BCE.

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Christianity and the Septuagint – Anthropological Bookmarks –

Victor Godeanu

Although the Christianity-Septuagint (LXX) theme is widely analyzed in countless studies, the main stress is usually put upon the objective issues regarding the "hard", written, testimonies. However, the human, subjective, aspect should be essential in approaching the Christian doctrine since it is founded, nevertheless, on the biunivocal relation between man and god. Or, concerning the definition of both man and god there is nothing of an "objective" nature to describe them – hence the use of G. Consequently, the main stepping stone into the realm of theology should rather be the subjective premise.

The relationship between Christianity and the Septuagint (LXX), the Hellenic generic expression of the Jewish Torah, originated and had developed entirely in a Romanized world and has its beginnings in the process of dissemination of the teachings of Jesus.

At one moment or another, the apostles, the propagators of this new savior (*messiah*)¹ Jesus from Nazareth, inevitably had to write down their practically oral preaching in order to preserve it as a reference testimony of faith for *their* respective followers. The stress on the possessive indicates that each apostle of the new faith acted practically as a twig of a branch, part of a larger tree – rooted not in the actual Jerusalem but in an assumed city, eternal, descended from heaven (to which The Book of Revelation refers in a synthetic manner). Although this formulation seems apologetic, it refers in fact to the idea of resurrection and eternal life that sprouted among Jews just about the time of Jesus, and not at all incidentally sustained by the Pharisees. The formalization of the oral discourse obviously took place long after the actual events they witnessed at first hand, or were told of, concerning Jesus' life and deeds, had happened. We should bear in mind that some key aspects of Jesus' deeds escaped, altogether or partially, to his main followers. These subjective written expressions of idiosyncratic points of view were to become a corpus of testimonies that came to be known as the "New Testament".

An intriguing and practically unanswerable question is to what texts exactly related the Christian authors, both for their own understanding and in order to argument to Jews and non-Jews the renewal of what came to be considered as the "old law"? Were those texts the Hebrew Scriptures, the Greek writings known as the Septuagint, or a mixture of sources, written and oral altogether? In this respect, it will be very difficult to assert that anyone outside the Jewish communities will convert to a new faith, or even agree to hear its overall message – peculiar at that time and long after in many aspects – if not offered in a vernacular language. Moreover, although the old testament/law, is generally considered as the source of the new testament/law, the fact that the later replaces in practice the former can suggest that, more or less, the basic idea was that of a split between the two, the new regulations representing the road map of the New

¹ A character created repeatedly in dire circumstances of history by the Jewish collective mind, the *messiah* is nevertheless, always, a real person.

Jerusalem that was to descend imminently upon the entire world – otherwise, the activity of the apostles among the gentiles being pointless. In this respect, the title of the Book of Revelation is suddenly taking a literary sense (however, of a still rather metaphoric content). In addition to that, the very idea of splitting, of separation, of discerning, represents one of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, the later historic developments forging the initial momentum – despite the fact that this discernment seemed to refer actually, at least according to the example of Jesus himself, to a separation from the deconstructive, futile, aspects of life and bonding to the constructive ones.

When the testamentary texts concerning Jesus were elaborated, the LXX was already more than 300 years old. Although the issue is still under debate, the circumstantial arguments show that the LXX was not regarded as a sacred, or even divinely inspired, text as Torah was. Today, is largely acknowledged the fact that Septuagint refers primarily to the translation of the canon of the first biblical writings, the Pentateuch. Moreover, the famous *Letter of Aristeas* could be in fact a response to a questioning coming from the metropolis with regard to the actual quality of the alexandrine collection. Although speculative, it is possible that the alexandrine Jews, largely ignorant of both Aramaic and Hebrew, tended to substitute the translation to the sacred original. The same situation could apply also to the large Jewish Diaspora throughout the Roman Empire.

Since the holy texts read in the local *beit kneset* were written in Hebrew, obsolete in the first century being replaced after the Babylonian bondage by Aramaic, scriptural texts lecture had to be associated with a vernacular Aramaic interpretative oral translation in order to be understood by the audience. This process generated the complex establishment of (rabbinic) interpretation that will define the later Jewish culture. On the other hand, the houses of prayer of the Diaspora, the synagogues, had a different practice, nevertheless cultural. Since the text they were using was that of the LXX, an interpretative translation from the sacred Hebrew to the everyday Greek easily understood by everyone in the Jewish community, it was read plainly without the unnecessary translation (*targum*). About the habitual practice in the metropolis, an interesting episode referring to a "custom" of Jesus is mentioned in Luke 4:15-30 (Mark 6: 2-6), when he went in the day of Shabbat into the synagogue of Nazareth, his hometown, stood up to read and was given the pericope of the day from the Book of Isaiah (61: 1-2). Standing and aloud he read the pericope in Hebrew and on finishing he sat down and began to explain the reading to the people. It is clear from the whole sequence that Jesus was giving a *targum*, an interpretation – in fact his own interpretation – to the gathered audience. However, his rendering of the Isaiah's pericope, redolent of him as the coming one, was badly received and consequently Jesus had to leave his hometown. Beyond the drama, it is also worth noticing that, obviously, by the year 30 of our era, the Hebrew Scripture came to play again the role of place of identity for at least some part of the population.² In fact, it indicates more of a radicalization, a nationalistic attitude with prejudicial overtones that can be corroborated with the doubtful attitude regarding the Greek text(s) of the alexandrine Jews and possible of at least some part of the Diaspora. The

² The origin of the popular gathering around the sacred text can be traced to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, immediately after the return from the Babylon bondage, when the holy texts were edited (canonized) and the custom of the weekly public lecture was instituted.

episode of the Samaritan woman and the story of the injured Jewish man saved also by a Samaritan could reflect the same tendency toward radicalism among the Jewish population.

However, the reaction of the people of Nazareth toward Jesus, one of their own, is somehow puzzling if we take into account the fact that the same Gospel of Mark (1:21-24) mentions just before this episode that: ... [Jesus] *went into Capernaum and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes* (KJV). Most certainly, the mention of the scribes refers to the institution of the translator (*meturgeman*) whose role was to proclaim over the interpretative translation, namely the *targum*. It is clear from the "astonishment" of the people that Jesus' way of interpretation was not at all common, but out of ordinary. It also infers that Jesus' custom mentioned above could have been that of translating the text himself, without the intervention of a specially designated "scribe". Nevertheless, Jesus' interpretation is sometimes received with therapeutic results, as was the case in Capernaum, and sometimes goes wrong, with life threatening results as it happened in Nazareth with his own persona.

Regarding the validity and, implicitly, the authoritative force of the Torah, the tradition did not retained any intentional solemn declaration of Jesus (as happened with the *beatitudes*) apart from his many circumstantial references caused by the fact that he had to answer to different questions on the topic. Despite the conjectural approach of the answers balancing the summoning of the questions, their general target was on one hand a challenge, usual and perfectly legitimate between scholars of all time, not less among interpreters of the Holy Scripture, aimed to accommodate the intellectual stature of the new comer and, on the other hand, the indisputable desire to make personal contact. The position of Jesus toward the authority of the Torah is necessarily paradigmatic for his followers. If Jesus rejected the Law, explicitly or implicitly, entirely or partially, any of his followers, then and later, was fully entitled to take the same path. However, since he did not rejected it in any way, someone, somewhere within Christian realm, took a different path than that of the teacher, because *the book* of Christianity became the Septuagint instead of Torah.

From its very beginnings, the Christian idea was claiming Jesus the Christ as its raw model, however in order to sustain two completely divergent views: (i) Paul's, showing sharp criticism toward the way in which the Law was perceived and consequently lived by, to what can be associated Mark's, whose gospel reflects Peter's thinking and eludes the term "law", and (ii) Matthew's and James's that had no claims toward the authority of the Law, thus seeing it as fitted for the Christian way of life also.

It seems that Torah, the sacred Law, instead of being unanimously considered as the "know-how" source for righteous living came to be perceived by some as discriminatory – once again, an argument to support the idea of two main streams tormenting the Jewish first century society. A hard current, uncompromising, nationalistic and discriminatory, oriented against the roman occupation, and a liberal current, favoring a rational attitude towards the *Pax Romana*.

It is a recognized fact that initially the teachings of Jesus were directed strictly to the local Jewish communities, and possibly to the Diaspora. When a Canaanite woman asked Jesus to heal

her daughter, his answer was: *I am not sent but onto the lost sheep of the House of Israel*³ (KJV) – will that "lost sheep" be the Diaspora Jews in danger of losing their tradition to *Pax Romana*? Following on the steps of Jesus' life, his words and his deeds may induce this idea. Moreover, according to Mathew 10: 5-6, when Jesus sends his apostles to preach he tells them explicitly:

[...] *go not into the way of the gentiles and into (any) city of the Samaritans enter not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel*. Arguably, Jesus' teaching being deeply rooted into the Torah, it appears that the rest of humanity came to him as a complement to the fulfillment of the Covenant of God with Abraham. However, he was not alone: Hillel's pharisaic Judaism was open to a true message of love and understanding toward "thy neighbor" as well.⁴

In the act of establishing the fundamental concepts of the new faith the teachings, both oral and written down as epistles, of Paul/Saul played a fundamental role. However born and raised far from the metropolis in Tarsus of Asia Minor, in the midst of a sophisticated Hellenized world using both Greek and Latin, he was indeed a Jew who got Roman citizenship and went to Jerusalem in order to study the Scriptures. At the renowned school of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), in order to master the skill of interpreting the holy writings he unavoidably appended two more languages, Hebrew and Aramaic. He became a hard core Pharisee⁵, proficient in Greco-Roman rhetoric. Paul's life was tormented: first, he was a persecutor of the adepts of the new messiah Jesus from Nazareth⁶; then, due to a striking theophany, he became himself an adept of Christ, was baptized in Damascus by Ananias (in about 34-35), disappeared for about three years (Gal. 1: 17) and reappeared to preach his own gospel (Rom. 1:1; 2:16).

All Paul's activity, both as a persecutor and afterwards as an adept, along Hellenistic Christians, pagan and Jewish (many of those being driven out of Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen and whose attitudes towards the Temple were critical), must have significantly influenced his way of perceiving Jesus' teachings – whom, it should be always stressed, he never met or heard of up until his coming to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the blinding theophany Paul had on the way to Damascus and the sudden shifting of camps did not annihilate or even dilute his theological skills and abilities. Contrary to any evidence coming from shallow lectures, Paul did not turn against the Torah and/or against the Jews (after all he was a Jew and a scholar in all respects). Instead, legitimated by his new rendition of the holiness of the scriptures, he found a

³ For a contextual understanding, Mat. 15: 22-28; 10: 6; Jes. 11:12; Jer. 50:6; Hez. 34; Zah. 11.

⁴ Mark 12: 28-31 states the answer of Jesus to a question, once more from a "scribe", regarding the first among all commandments: *The first of all commandments Hear o Israel the Lord our God is one Lord and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment And the second (is) like (namely) this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self*.

⁵ In his own words: *...as touching the law a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church* (Ph. 3:5-6). However, this description apparently contradicts Luke's rendering of Gamaliel in Acts (5:34-39). Moreover, Gamaliel's school belonged to the greater school of Hillel, who propagated teachings showing a large degree of tolerance and acceptance, very similar to the teachings of Jesus and in perfect accordance with the above passage from Acts. In my opinion, Paul's hard pharisaic pietism rather indicates the rival school of Shamai, adept of the strictness and intransigence toward the Law.

⁶ They were named *Christians*, by a Greek term, later and far away from Judea, in Antioch, as it is stated by Luke in Acts 11:26. Apparently, the original community in Jerusalem did not even know that an Antioch "Christian" community existed: *And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of god* (Acts 11:1).

way to thoroughly reshape his previous convictions. After all, in his Letter to the Romans (2: 7-15) he declares the preeminence of the Jews for both reward and punishment in the eternal life.

Another significant issue regarding the use of the Septuagint among Christians refers to the frictions among the apostles that led to the first general assembly of the primary Church, in the year 49/50. Those frictions were caused by diverging views regarding the necessity, or not, from the part of the Gentile converts to first adopt the Torah, be circumcised and only then be accepted into the community, or to be exempted altogether from the "old law". As a side note, it is worth noticing the reaction of the Jerusalem community to the challenge coming from the other communities, Christian as well, situated far away of Judea, by calling an assembly of all the apostles in order to *debate* the problem and achieve a satisfactory resolution for all parts. This argumentative but nevertheless collegial way of dealing with problems of fundamental importance, analogical to the institution of the Sanhedrin, became ever since normative for the Church through the institution of the synod/council. The problem of conversion was a key problem, then and retrospectively, because it touched the very identity of the group of followers of Jesus the Christ. Were they to continue as just another conjectural sectarian denomination of the Jewish faith, or cut the umbilical cord and get into the open as a fully fledged faith? In fact, the dilemma touches a deep theo-anthropological dimension because the change implies a radical shift of identity – an identity derived directly from the togetherness of the sons of Abraham around Torah and its hefty set of regulations essentially designed to define them as human beings, apart from the rest of the world⁷. Suddenly, the old, solid, tradition becomes relative.

My own reckoning is that the final decisions of the assembly to sustain the exemption of the Gentiles from the traditional provisions led implicitly to the abandon of the Torah, the godliness of Christ being formally acknowledged. The teachings of their Christ had to replace the everlasting word of the Torah as living Word. Consequently, the Septuagint, the supposedly less than divine text, came in fact into light as the scripture of choice for the new identity. Moreover, the preeminence of the live word over the written letter, of which Paul was the spearhead, became crucial for building the new expansion of God throughout the entire world.

Newly born and without the support of a sturdy tradition, the Christians had to live their faith in a reverse perspective, from inside out – hence, the apocalyptic expectations, the taste for monastic seclusion, the martyrdom and the call for it.

⁷ Regarding the notion of "rest of the world", the cultivated Jewish mind possessed in the epoch not less than three perceptions: (i) the Greek, subtle, "oikumene", (ii) the pragmatic Roman "Pax Romana" and (iii) the legacy of the Covenant of Abraham, "olam" – the council's mind being nevertheless Jewish, the decisions taken should have been in the spirit of *olam*.

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The Secondary Religious Vocabulary and the Translation of the Qur'an

George Grigore

This study, carried on a special aspect of the translation of the Qur'ān – the one linked to the secondary religious vocabulary – starts, in principle, from Eugen Nida's study on the same type of practical and theoretical aspects in translating the Bible, as stated in his book *Signs, Sense, Translation* (Nida, E., 1984). Moreover, we must add that part of the aspects analyzed in this study, have been generally approached in my work: "Problematica traducerii Coranului în limba română" (*The Problems of Translating the Qur'ān in Romanian*) (Grigore, G., 1997).

The vocabulary of the Qur'ān, like the vocabulary of any other sacred book, can usually be divided into religious vocabulary, which carries the very notions contouring the respective religious system, and general vocabulary. Both religious and general vocabulary are subject to an evolution of meaning, the first category as a result of the institutionalization of religion, the second as a result of a normal, expected transformation, accomplished over time, that occurs in any language.

Therefore, while speaking of the religious vocabulary in the Qur'ān and its translation, it is necessary to distinguish between primary religious vocabulary and the secondary one. "By primary religious vocabulary we mean that vocabulary which is typical of the original documents, which form more or less the historical base for primary religious experience. Secondary religious vocabulary is that type of vocabulary which grows out of the institutional development of the religion" (Nida, E., 1984, p.110-111).

Primary religious vocabulary is figurate, offering immediate reality new dimensions through which they try to explain the ultimate reality of events, cosmological and supernatural values. For this reason, this type of vocabulary poses particularly difficult translation problems, for it is the one weaving that mythic atmosphere specific to sacred writings. We here refer to myth in terms of its meaning of intuitive expression, as opposed to the systematic philosophical expression which acts in secondary religious texts derived from primary text.

The secondary religious vocabulary, derived from the primary one, tends to be explanatory, apologetic, technical and moreover demystifying. This very demystification of the religious vocabulary imposes the return to basic texts and the reconsideration of each and every term. As we very well know, the Bible has been translated in hundreds of languages and a secondary vocabulary sprung up, following a philosophical model; every time they analyze a biblical concept in one of these languages, they start from the meaning and the metaphorical connotations of the original word in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek.

That is why, if a translator replaces the sense of a term in the primary religious vocabulary with the sense of the term derived from it, much more familiar and widespread, this leads to a more technical, demystified text and, ultimately, that ineffable, indirectly suggested part disappears.

In order to see the effects of the substitution of a type of vocabulary with another one in the translation of the Qur'ān, we dwell first of all on translation rendering of the Qur'ānic word: *šarī'a*.

The primary sense of the word *šarī'a*, which occurs once in the Qur'an, at XLV, 18, designates "way", "road", "path" (Penrice, 1970 : 76). But it is not just a way; it is the one leading to a spring. Thus, only by following it, a traveler's life can be saved, while all the other ones, that are deceptive, would have led to his perdition. The metaphor of the saving path will designate "God's path", *šarī'atu llāh*, the only one to be followed in order to save one's soul. Departing from this sense, early enough, the Islamic religious institutions established the meaning of this phrase as "God's law", "sacred law", etc. Régis Blachère says that "*šarī'a* est 'voie'. Sens confirmé dans les commentaires. Mais il est évident qu'on est tout près déjà du sens de 'loi' qui sera celui de ce nom plus tard" (Blachère, R., 530).

Šarī'a represents the starting point for a great number of metaphors like: *rašada* – "to follow the right path", "to be well guided" with its derivatives: *rašīd* – "the one well guided", *muršīd* – "guide", *'iršād* – "guidance", etc., or the derivatives of another root, *hadā*, somewhat synonymous to *rašada*, that is *hudā* – "the right way", "guidance"; *mahdi(n)* – *the one guided (by God)*. Moreover, in order to express the deviance from the right path, the Qur'ān uses a serie of words like: *d}alāl* – "straying", *tad}līl* – "leading astray", *murūq* and *māriq* "straying and the person straying" respectively; the secondary meaning is "apostasy", "renegade", etc. Making the word *šarī'a* an equivalent of "law" (divine, sacred) will deprive the Qur'ān text of one of its metaphoric supports by introducing another meaning, different from the original one, and will lead to an absurdity from a dogmatic point of view:

tumma ġa 'alnā-ka 'alā šarī'atⁱⁿ min al- 'amri

(Al-Qur'ān, XLV, 18)

Apoi te vom așeza deasupra unei legi cu privire la afacerea (credinței).

(Isopescul, 1912: 437)

/And now we have put you over a law of (our) commandment/

Some other translations center themselves on the primary meaning of *šarī'a*, with its entire metaphoric load:

And now we have set thee on a clear road of (our) commandment

(Pickthall, 1981: 661)

Now We have set you [Muhammad] on a clear religious path, so follow it.

(Abdel Haleem, M.A.S, 2005: 325)

Nous t'avons mis à la direction de l'ordre.

(Chouraqui, 1990: 1035)

The cognate *šir'a* also used once, at V, 48, in parallel to its synonymous *minhāġ* meaning "way" or "path", it is rendered usually by its secondary meaning, "law":

likullⁱⁿ ġa 'alnā minkum šir'at^{an} wa minhāġ^{an}

(Al-Qur'ān, V, 48)

For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way.

(Pickthall, 1981: 145)

We have assigned a law and a path to each of you.

(Abdel Haleem, 2005: 72)

Another example of the development of primary religious vocabulary occurred in connection with the term *ḥalīfa* – “caliph”. Its secondary meaning is much more famous than its primary meaning and this one will surface in many of the translations we analyze.

The *ḥalīfa*, derived from the root *ḥalafa*, is word literally meaning “one who replaces someone else who left or died” (English: caliph), “to come after”, “to leave heirs” etc. The word *ḥalīfa*, as it appears in the Qur’ān, acquires many other meanings as: “assistant”, “succesor”, and “heir” in an ambiguity significant to its eventual evolution. *Ḥalīfatu-llāhi*, “God’s deputy, representative on Earth” – or *Vicarus Dei*, the way Ludovico Marraci translated it – has been understood by the Muslim leaders as the divine right to the throne, investing with power, with authority coming directly from God.

The institution of caliphate was born on the day after the death of the Prophet when the new head of the community, Abu-Bakr, became in 632 *ḥ-alīfatu-rasūli-llāhi*. With him, *ḥalīfa* came to mean heir of the prophet, or the keeper of the moral and material heritage left by the prophet, in his double quality of founder of the religion and artisan of the Islamic community and politics, and much less his spiritual quality of prophet and herald of God’s Word.

In the context of Islam, however, the word acquires a narrower meaning. The Muslim *ḥalīfa* is the successor (in a line of successors) to Prophet Muh}ammad’s position as the political, military, and administrative leader of the Muslims. The prophetic role of Muh}ammad is strictly not included in this definition, as the Qur’ān (XXXIII, 40: *ḥātamu l-nabiyyīn* “the Seal of the Prophets”) and *H}adīṭ* clearly state that Muhammad was the last of the prophets. *Ḥilāfa* is a related Arabic word which, in the context of Islam, is used to denote the government of the Muslim state, of which the *ḥalīfa* is the head. The institutionalization of the caliph function is also due, as it seems, to a tradition left by the prophet Muh}ammad: “After me the caliphs will come, after the caliphs the emirs, after the emirs the kings, and after the kings the tyrants...” (Ibn al-’Aṭīr, 1871, t. 5: 155).

With this secondary meaning, of leader of the Islamic community, the word *ḥalīfa* entered English and many other languages as “caliph”.

By rendering *ḥalīfa* by “caliph” in the translation of the Qur’an, an alien, even aberrant meaning in the text is introduced, as this title is given to Judaic kings, as in the next example:

yā dāwūd ’innā ḡa’alnā-ka ḥalīfat^{an} fī-l-’ard}i

(Al-Qur’an, XXXVIII, 26)

O David, Noi te-am făcut Chalif pe pământ...

(Isopescul, 1912: 402)

/Oh David, we made you caliph on Earth.../

O, Dawud, nous t’avons mis pour calife de la terre.

(Chouraqui, 1990: 501)

Blachère rendered this word by “vicaire”, but he explains in a footnote: “*ḥalīfa* est très imparfaitement rendu par vicaire. La racine arabe exprime la notion de: succéder à quelqu'un qui n'occupe plus la place. Des l'époque de Mahomet, il est vraisemblable que le nom *ḥalīfa*, à la suite d'un glissement de sens, signifiait lieutenant, vicaire, représentant” (Blachère, R., 1999: 484).

In this situation the only acceptable equivalent, in my opinion, is based on the primary meaning of the word: “deputy”, “successor”, as in the next example:

O David! nous t'avons établi notre lieutenant sur la terre.

(Kasimirski, 1921: 93)

The same term is referring to Adam also (II,30)

A particularly quite eloquent development in the history of Islam took place with respect to the term *al-madīna* “town”, “city”, “fortress”, referring to a very known toponimic in the Islamic world.

Madīna means nowadays just “town”, nevertheless it has a more specialized and restrictive meaning in the Qur'ān. This word is derived from the root signifying “law”, “trial”, “reckoning” and these meanings occur in the Qur'ān (Nah}la, 1988: 56).

Thus *madīna* – a place name derived from the root *dyn* “low” – was the area supervised by a legislator, *dayyān*. Some of the occurrences of the word *madīna* in the Qur'ān are to be found in the verses on the prophets prior to Muh}ammad, the meaning here being of “the place where God's law is in force” (IX, 101; 120; LXIII, 8), while four occurrences refer to Yaṭrīb oasis where the prophet and his followers establish the first Islamic dwelling, after being driven away from Mecca. Thus, *madīnatu al-nabī* means “the place where the law brought by the prophet is in force” (Nah}la, 1988: 57). Even during prophet Muh}ammad's lifetime, *al-madīna* replaces the old name of the oasis, Yaṭrīb. In the same Qur'ānic sense, *madīna* will later name, par excellence, Islamic first rank cities: Cairo, Isfahan, Samarkand, Bukhara, while the Abbasid caliphs will make Baghdad known as *madīnatu al-salām* – “the place where peace reigns”. Nowadays, even in some Arabic dialects, *madīna* means the center of the town where state institutions are gathered, the old town with its traditions etc.

Moreover the word *madīna* is used in the first centuries of the Islamic state to name the administrative and religious centers of provinces. Only in the Middle Ages was the word extended to non-Muslim cities, thus acquiring the general meaning of town.

Because this secondary meaning prevails now in Arabic, translators of the Qur'ān will choose it, ignoring its primary meaning. Consequently the receptor of such a translation will not even begin to imagine why Yaṭrīb oasis, which did not even have the qualities of a fortress by the standards of those times, is named *Al-Madīna*, *La Città*, *La Ville*, *The Town*, *Oraşul*.

wa min h}awli-kum min al- 'a'rāb munāfiqūna wa min 'ahli l-madīna.

(Al-Qur'ān, IX: 101)

The sense of town appears in the Pickthall translation where the expression “ahl al-madina” is rendered by townspeople of Al-Madinah, even the opposition indicated by this Verse

is between the Idolater Arabs and the Arabs who received the Law:

And among the Bedouins around you, some are hypocrites, and so are some among the people of *al-Madīna* who persist in hypocrisy...

(Khan/Al-Hilali, 1996: 226)

And among those around you of the wandering Arabs there are hypocrites, and among the townspeople of *al-Madīnah* (there are some who) persist in hypocrisy...

(Pickthall, 1981: 258)

Keeping the term *al-Madīna* in the translations, with the sense of the toponime only, without any explanation, this annihilates the opposition between those which received the law and the other which did not receive it yet (being the out “the place of law” – *al-madīna*):

Parmi ceux de Bédouins qui sont autour de vous et parmi les habitants de Médine, il est des hypocrites qui sont diaboliques en l’“hypocrisie”.

(Blachère, 1999: 226)

Parmi ceux qui vous entourent, il est des A‘rab embusques, comme le clan de Médine, obstinée aux embuscades.

(Chouraqui, 1990: 393)

Examples of such words with altered meaning are extremely numerous, setting traps for the translator who has to turn back in time to the meaning the words had in prophet Muh}ammad’s time and to clear away the thicket of meanings – denoting and connoting – eventually built up all around them.

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Islamic Kalām: A possible role in contemporary Science and religion dialogue

M. B. Altaie¹

“Probably no chapter in the history of the cosmological argument is as significant – or as universally ignored – as that of the Arabic theologians and philosophers. Although we find in them the origin and development of two of the most important versions of the cosmological argument, namely the argument from temporality and the argument from contingency, the contribution of these Islamic thinkers is virtually ignored in western anthologies and books on the subject”.

William Lane Craig (1979)

The contemporary debate on issues in science and religion reminds me of the Kalām debates that started by the 8th century in Basrah among a group of several Muslim thinkers and theologians who were seeking a rational approach to conceive God, comprehend Nature and understand human action. The debate soon was spread north to Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic empire which was extending at that time from China in the east to Morocco and Spain in the west. A 9th century wise and science loving Caliph in Baghdad named al-Ma'moon, who was the son of the famous Caliph Haroon al-Rasheed, encouraged Kalām debates by holding such meetings in his Royal Palace.

In Arabic “Kalām” means speech (or a collection of words). However, it also means “dialogue” and this is the meaning which was intended for Islamic Kalām. In its philosophical content “Kalām” is a collection of concepts, assumptions, principles, and problems that is aimed to explain the relationship between God and the physical world in accordance with the basics of Islamic creed.

Classically Kalām was considered to form the foundation of jurisprudence, or “*Fiqh*”, which constitute the base for Islamic Shari'a (the Islamic religious rules of life). The reason for this is that the Islamic Shari'a constitutes a deductive system of rules and instructions which needs logical foundation to be fully justified and established. Kalām was classified into *Jaleel al-Kalām* and *Daqīq al-Kalām*. The former is the part dealing with problems related to the divine attributes, the resurrection of the dead, and the questions related to the divine knowledge, will, and power. These subjects lead to the question of human's free Will held by one school of Kalām, and the counter proposal of self-acquisition of actions that was suggested by another school.

On the other hand, *Daqīq al-Kalām* deals with problems of natural philosophy, most prominent of which is the question of the creation of the world and the question of causality.

This leads to discussing the concepts of space, time, motion, force, and many other aspects of the physical world.

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Using Ian Barbour's terminology one may say that *Jaleel al- Kalām* could be called "natural theology" whereas *Daqīq al- Kalām* is the "theology of nature"².

The dependence of Islamic jurisprudence on Kalām arguments was quite clear through the contributions of Islamic clerics who tried to lay down new foundations for jurisprudence. One prominent example was Ibn Hazm al-Zahiri who summarized some of the most fundamental opinions and views of *Daqīq al- Kalām*, though not naming it as such, in the first volume of his treatise "*Alfisal fi Al-Milal wa Al-Ahwa' wa Al-Nihal*".

Despite the fact that the subject of Kalām was largely ignored, I feel that this trend has much to offer to the subjects of natural philosophy and the contemporary arguments in the debate between science and religion, and therefore is worth studying. Despite the fact that Kalām was the subject of thoughts many centuries ago in the Islamic world, nevertheless many of its arguments are still living and have sound value in the contemporary science and religion dialogue. Indeed, the "Kalām cosmological Argument" which was re-devised by William Craig³ is just one contemporary example in a whole field of ideas, concepts, and arguments that can be utilized by the modern philosophy of science. However, the subject is in such state now that it cannot lend itself to an effective role without being purified, reformulated and harmonized with modern philosophy. This requires much work to be done and a pains-taking effort, in order to qualify *Daqīq al- Kalām* for a contemporary role.

For the sake of acquainting the reader with the necessary background in Kalām I am going to expose those views that have a sound value in present day natural philosophy. This will include my own re-arrangement and designation of the basic doctrines and principles of the Kalām. I will try to summarize their main contributions to natural philosophy which was covered under *Daqīq al- Kalām*, and I will skim over some vital problems where I feel some genuine research works is needed to be done in order to see a possible use of Kalām in contemporary science and religion dialogue.

Reasons for the rise of Kalām

One can say that there are two basic motivations for the emergence of Kalām, the first was internal; different opinions expressed by Muslim theologians in respect to the fate of the sinner initiated an argument that went to develop into whole line of thought. For example some theologians suggested that a sinner is a non-believer and should be considered Kāfer (one who breaches of the Islamic belief). Other theologians suggested that he should be considered a descendent (*Fāsiq*), a mid-rank which is in between a Kāfer and a believer. The second reason was caused by reaction of Muslims to the new ideas and thoughts they faced when they came into contact with new nations and civilizations, namely the Romans and the Hindu, at the time when Muslim came in contact with those nations. This contact, at a time when Muslims were the dominating power in the world, created a "Dialogue between Civilizations" rather than a "Clash

² Barbour, I. – Barbour, I G., *Religion and Science*, (London: SCM Press, 1998), p. 100.

³ Craig, W. L., *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1979).

of Civilizations". It is quite unfortunate and disappointing that humanity now and thirteen centuries after that great experience comes to the state of no choice other than the Clash of Civilizations according to the American strategist Samuel Huntington.

The two main schools of Kalām

Mutakallimūn (the doctors of Kalām) formed two main schools, the *Mu'tazilites* who was the first to be formed, and the *Ash'arites*. Prominent leaders of the *Mu'tazilites* were Wāsil Ibn Atta' (d. 748 A.D), Amr ibn Ubaed (d. 762 A.D), Abul Huthail al-Allāf (d. 841 A.D), Ibrāhim al-Nazzām (d. 835 A.D), and al-Jāhiz (d. 868 A.D). Most of the original contributions of the leaders of *Kalām* were lost, but some of their main ideas and arguments were preserved through the writings of their students or opponents. At a later period some prominent leaders of *Mu'tazilites* appeared who contributed a preserved valuable monographs and critiques. Most prominent of these was Abu al-Hussein al-Khayyāt (d.~ 912 A.D) and Abu al-Kāssim al-Balkhī (sometimes called al-Kabi) (d. 931 A.D), Abu Ali al-Jeba'ie (d. 915 A.D) and his Son Abu Hashim al-Jeba'ie (d. 933 A.D). Some of the original works of these prominent *Mu'tazilites* were preserved through the monographs written by their students and followers like Abu Rasheed al-Naysāburi (d. 1024 A.D) and Abdul-Jabbār al-Hamadāni (d. 1024 A.D) who wrote an extensive monograph about *Mu'tazilites* that preserved much of their original thoughts and his student Ahmed ibn Mattaweyh (d. 1059 A.D) who wrote a book preserving a good deal of the opinions of early *Mu'tazilites* on the subjects of *Daqīq al- Kalām*.

The *Ash'arites* school was formed by Abu al-Hasan al -Ash'ari (d. 935 A.D) who broke away from the *Mu'tazilites* and formed a new school of thought within the trends of *Kalām*. Beside Al-Ash'ari the most prominent contributors to *Ash'arites Kalām* was Abu Bakr al-Bāqillāni (d. 1012 A.D), and later Abu Al-Ma'ālī Al-Juayni (d. 1085 A.D) who wrote some excellent monographs on *Daqīq al- Kalām* and *Jaleel al- Kalām*. However one can say that the most efficient utilization of the *Kalām* was made by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 A.D) whose contributions are the most mature ones among the *Ash'arites*. At late times the *Ash'arites Kalām* was reformulated by Azud Aldeen al-Eji (d. 1355 A.D) that is considered the last classical *Mutakallim*.

Daqīq al- Kalām investigated some of the basic concepts that are the subjects of contemporary physics, like space, time, matter, force, speed, heat, colors, smells (gases), and the like, so it is quite legitimate to revisit *Daqīq al- Kalām* seeking common understanding, not necessarily with physics as such but may be with the scientific philosophy of the concepts. This trend is supported by the fact that the resources of *Kalām* are quite different from those of the classical natural philosophy including the philosophy of the Greeks. *Mutakallimūn* considered the Qur'an as the prime source for their knowledge about the world, and accordingly they intended to set-up to understand the world according to the stipulations of the Qur'an. This is the main reason why we find that some concepts of *Kalām* are different in their meanings and implications from their counter part in the Greek and Indian philosophy. For example: the Qur'an stipulates that the world was created by God some finite time in the past, accordingly *Mutakallimūn* projected this demand into a whole theory of creation of the world and generated

their own understanding of substances (*Jawāher*) and the accidents (*A'rāth*)⁴ as part of a general principle of discreteness in order to serve the notion of creation. On the other hand, for God to be free in designing the world according to his own unpredictable will, and in order that he performs full control over the world, the world had to be thought of as being composed of unstable and ever changing events. This requirement generated the concept of ever changing accidents which was expressed by the principle of continued re-creation. Accordingly this leads to consider the laws of nature as being undetermined, and therefore lead Mutakallimūn to develop a new concept of causality.

In no way I would claim here that Kalām forms an integrated body of thought, or that it can be found complete with one individual *Mutakallim*, or that it forms a complete modern philosophy of nature. Rather, I will try to uncover aspects of those thoughts of the Mutakallimūn which might serve as a possible candidate for integration with the contemporary philosophy of natural sciences, in an endeavor to anticipate a kind of a philosophical feed back to the theory of nature. For example, the principle of continual creation can be utilized to understand better the state of indeterminacy of measurement in the physical world. Also, the notion of “discrete time” which was proposed by Mutakallimūn as a part of the general principle of discreteness (atomism) of nature can be utilized in constructing an “all discrete” theory of nature that may contribute to eliminate the present fundamental theoretical problems related to the unification of natural physical forces. On the other hand some questions that have been considered already by *Jaleel al-Kalām* do echo with prime issues in the contemporary debates in science and religion that are taking place in the West. Questions concerning the knowledge of God, his action in the physical world, his control of the future and the degree of freedom enjoyed by the natural world and humans were some of the main issues that were debated by Mutakallimūn.

Sources and methodology of Kalām

Mutakallimūn considered the Qur'an to be their main source for deducing knowledge about the world. Although they did not explicitly refer much to the Qur'anic verses, but it was clear that their main principles were deduced from the Qur'an. This means that they followed a logical sequence of deduction which starts with the divine revelations, that have to be interpreted rationally, and then tried to understand nature accordingly. Richard Walzer summarized this by saying that: “*Mutakallimūn* followed a methodology that is distinct from that of the philosophers in that they take the truth of Islam as their starting point”.⁵ William Craig also has exposed such a conclusion saying that “*The main difference between a Mutakallimūn (practitioner of Kalām) and a Failasuf (philosopher) lies in the methodological approach to the object of their study: while the practitioner of Kalām takes the truth of Islam as his starting-point, the man of philosophy, though he may take pleasure in the rediscovery of Qur'anic principles, does not*

⁴ This explains why the Islamic atomism had to be different from the Greek atomism, a question that has upset Harry Wolfson. See: Wolfson, H. A. *The Philosophy of The Kalām*, (Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 472-486.

⁵ Walzer, Richard “Early Islamic Philosophers”, in *The Cambridge History of Late Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 648.

make them his starting-point, but follows a 'method of research independent of dogma, without, however, rejecting the dogma or ignoring it in its sources'.⁶

The main approach of Mutakallimūn to understand the world can be presented as follows:

God → Reason → The World

This is just opposite to the approach of the Greek philosophers, which can be presented by the sequence

The World → Reason → God

Effectively the same difference applies to Muslim philosophers as opposed to Mutakallimūn, but only to note for the compromising approach which was mostly followed by Muslim philosophers who tried hard to reconcile Greek philosophy and Islam.

Philosophy and Kalam

This reconciliatory approach were started already with al-Kindi (d. 868 A.D) and was further developed by al-Farabi (d. 950 A.D) and Avicenna (d. 1036 A.D) who adopted mainly the new-Platonic approach. This approach of the early Muslim philosophers to recognize the divine action in the world was refuted by al-Ghazālī in his book "*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*"⁷. But it was Averroes (d.1198 A.D) who later championed the defense of the doctrines of Aristotle, trying to refute the arguments of al-Ghazālī in his book "*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*"⁸. Averroes also made his efforts to show that Islam can accommodate the views of the Greek philosophy through certain interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an in his book "*Faslul-maqāl fī mā bayna al Shari'a wa al-hikma min al-ittisāl*"⁹. However, this defense was not very successful since the arguments presented by al-Ghazālī were already strong enough and very effective in distracting the attention of the concerned peoples away from philosophy. The fact that at the time of al-Ghazālī Kalām was still under siege and was generally not favored by the mainstream authors and the religious jury, caused the general trend of Islamic thoughts to be directed toward a more fundamentalist approach that had later to breed thinkers like Ibn Taymiyyah. The birth of such trends that minimizes the role of rational approach to understand God and the world surely caused a set-back in the rational Islamic endeavor.

Some of the late Mutakallimūn, who lived during the eleventh century and later, especially those belonging to the Mu'tazilites, borrowed some of the philosophical arguments in their endeavor to prove the existence of God and theorize his attributes. This approach was not

⁶ Craig, W. L., *The Kalām Cosmological Argument*, p. 17 and references therein.

⁷ al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifa*, (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*), translated by Michael Marmura, (Brigham Young University Press, Utah 2000).

⁸ Averroes, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*), translated from Arabic with introduction and notes by Simon Van den Bergh, Published and distributed by the trustee of the E.J. W. Gibb Memorial, 1930.

⁹ Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religions and Philosophy*, published and translated as: Averrões, *The Philosophy and Theology of Averroes*, trans. Mohammed Jamil-al-Rahman (Baroda: A. G. Widgery, 1921)

very successful for it was inconsistent with the basic Kalām thesis which assumes that the revelations are the prime source of knowledge in order to understand the world.

The main principles of Daqīq al-Kalām

Despite that the different views expressed by Mutakallimūn were belonging to different schools of Kalām, one find that most views do subscribed to some common basic principles that they have adopted to understand nature. I have recognized the following five principles¹⁰:

1. The Creation of the world¹¹:

According to Mutakallimūn the world is not eternal but was created some finite time ago in the past. Space and time had no meaning and never existed before the creation of the world¹². Despite the fact that some of the Mutakallimūn believed that creation took place out of a pre-existing form of matter, the dominant view of Mutakallimūn in this respect was that creation took place *ex-nihilo* i.e., out of nothing¹³. Accordingly they considered every constituent of the world to be temporal.

2. Discreteness of natural structures:

Mutakallimūn believed that all entities in the world are composed of a finite number of fundamental components each was called *Jawhar* (the substance)¹⁴ that is non-divisible and has no parts. The *Jawhar* was thought to be an abstract entity that acquires its physical properties and value when occupied by a character called '*Aradh* (i.e., the accident)¹⁵. These accidents are ever-changing characters. Discreteness applies not only to material bodies but to space, time, motion, energy (heat), and all other properties of matter¹⁶. Some authors have tried in vain to relate the Islamic concept of atom with those of the Greek or Hindu¹⁷. However, because the Islamic atom is magnitudeless and because the number of atoms in the world is finite, it was found that it is

¹⁰ Altaie, M.B., "The Scientific value of Daqīq al-Kalām", in *Journal of Islamic Thought and Scientific Creativity*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 7-18, 1994.

¹¹ The best available account of this doctrine was given by al-Ghazali in his celebrated book *Tahafut al-Falasifa*, (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*) cited above.

¹² William Craig re-devised this doctrine in a more modern context; see his book *The Kalām Cosmological argument*, *loc.cit.* p. 63.

¹³ al-Alousi, H.M., *A Dialogue Between Philosophers and Mutakallimūn*, (Beirut: Arab Foundation for Studies, 2nd ed., 1980) p. 59. Also, see Wolfson, *loc.cit.* p. 359-372.

¹⁴ The name *Jawhar* and *al-Jawhar* are unanimous, however the term *al-Jawhar al-fard* is the term given to the non-divisible entity out of which all things of the world is composed, see Pines, S., *Beitrage zur Islamischen Atomenlebre*, (Berlin: 1939) for a detailed account on this terminology. It is also of importance to point that the term substances (as originally defined within the Greek philosophy) do not accurately correspond to the Islamic atom. There are some basic differences between the Greek atom and the Islamic atom (see Wolfson p. 471-472)

¹⁵ It is sometimes claimed that the *Jawhar* is a magnitudeless entity (see, Wolfson p. 472) but in fact this identification is not unanimous since, although Mu'tazilites have considered the *Jawhar* to be magnitudeless, Ash'arites consider it to have some magnitude, see Al-Juwayni, p. 159.

¹⁶ Altaie, M.B., "Atomism according to Mutakallimūn", in *Études Orientales*, Vol. 23/24, pp. 49-90, 2005.

¹⁷ Wolfson, H.A. *Ibid*, p. 466.

unlikely that the Muslims have taken this idea from other nation; the Islamic atom has genuinely different properties which make it distinguished¹⁸.

3. Continual re-creation and ever changing world:

Because God is the absolutely able creator of the world and because He is live and ever acting to sustain the universe, therefore the world has to be re-created every moment and another¹⁹. This re-creation occurs with the accidents not with the substance, but since the substances cannot be realized without being attached to some accidents, therefore, the re-creation of the accidents effectively dominates over the substances too. By such a process God stand to be the sustainer of the world. This principle is very important for two reasons: the first is that it leads to the indeterminism of the world and the second is because it has a sound physical echo in contemporary quantum physics. In respect of the second it is astonishing to know that this understanding would explain why in the quantum world we do not have fixed values for the properties of the systems; rather we always have the average being expressed by the so-called expectation values. So this principle can provide yet another explanation to the fact that our physical measurements detect only the average possible values.

4. Indeterminism of the world:

Since God possess the absolute free will, and since He is the personal creator and the sustainer of the world, He is then at liberty to take any action He wishes in respect to the state of the world or its control. Consequently laws of nature that we recognize has to be probabilistic not deterministic and that the physical values are to be contingent and undetermined²⁰. This is how the Mutakallimūn deduced the indeterminacy of the world. This resulted in rejecting the existence of natural causality²¹ because nature, according to Mutakallimūn, cannot have any sort of will. Mutakallimūn also rejected the Greek four basic elements²² and the existence of any kind of self-acting property belonging to those elements. This is a very central argument in Kalām for the proof of the need for God; if nature is blind no productive development would be expected.

5. Integrity of space and time:

Mutakallimūn had the understanding that space has no meaning on its own. Without having a body we cannot realize the existence of a space. So is the time, which cannot be realized without the existence of motion which needs a body to be affected²³. This connection of

¹⁸ Pines, S., *Beitrage zur Islamischen Atomenlebre*, (Berlin:1939).

¹⁹ The best account for this doctrine is given in the book of Abu al-Ma'ali al-Juwayni, *Al-Shamil Fi Usul Addeen*, (in Arabic), p. 159.

²⁰ This view echoes with what the philosophy of quantum theory stipulates according to the interpretation of the Copenhagen school. see Jammer, Max, *The Philosophy of Quantum Theory*, (Weily, New York, 1974).

²¹ However, this does not mean that that *Mutakallimūn* rejected causal relation or the existence of cause and effect, rather they believed in such relations but only to the extent that it would reflect our own logic rather than having to play the role of full control of nature by itself. This is perhaps one of the most misunderstood problems of *Kalām*.

²² See, for example, al-Baqqillani, *Kitab Tamheed Al-Awael*, (in Arabic) Ed. Imad Aldeen Hayder, (Beirut: 1987).

²³ Altaie, M.B. *Time in Islamic Kalām*, a paper delivered at the conference on *Einstein, God and Time*, Oxford University, Sept. 11-13, 2005.

space and time is deeply rooted in Arabic²⁴. Therefore, neither absolute space nor absolute time does exist²⁵. This understanding formulated their understanding of motion as being discrete and that the trajectory of motion is composed of neighboring “rest-points”²⁶. Accordingly they say that a body is seen moving faster than another only because the number of rest-points along its trajectory is small compared to those along the trajectory of the other. However, the Mu’tazilite al-Nazzām believed that motion on the microscopic level takes place in discrete jumps called “*tafra*”. Max Jammer considered this understanding of al-Nazzām as being the oldest realization of a quantum motion, he says: “In fact al-Nazzām’s notion of leap, his designation of an analyzable inter-phenomenon, may be regarded as an early forerunner of Bohr’s conception of quantum jumps”²⁷.

Current approaches in Science and religion

The current approaches in science and religion debates in the West do seem to follow trends similar to those of the Greek philosophers, reconciling some Christian theological doctrines with scientific paradigms, through rationalizing theology and bringing some of its doctrines into the realm of scientific realization. Such an approach have some positive side as it follows the paradigm of free rational enquiry, but would, unfortunately, lead to re-designing God, his attributes and action to fit the contemporary logic of science. This has already resulted in notions like God-of-the-gaps and the more subtle notion of intelligent design. Genuine scholars of science and religion are aware of this danger, but only to some limited extent. The reason why such a compromising approach may lead into distortions on the theological part is the embedded eagerness to have a complete theory that would harmonize science and religion and explain every thing. Such eagerness could push into similar mistakes that the old Mutakallimūn could not have avoided, resulting in an inconsistent theology.

A safer approach would assume certain theologically based doctrines, which may or may not find an immediate realization within the framework of science, and then to seek a better and deeper understanding of nature and the human action through that approach. Polkinghorne puts this by saying “*Both theology and science have to speak of entities which are not directly observable. In consequence, both must be prepared to make use of model and metaphor*”.²⁸ Such a use of model and metaphor can be realized through the paradigm of Kalām rather than the paradigm of science alone or that of philosophy. This is more fruitful an approach since here religion will have a feedback on science and vice versa. The outcome will be a framework within which religion and science will both be developing genuinely, hopefully, into convergence.

²⁴ The concepts of space and time in Arabic is given in many general as well as specialized dictionaries, see for example al-Jurjani, *Al-Tareefat*, p. 19 and 61.

²⁵ The best reference for these terms is *Al-Fisal* of Ibn Hazm, where he explicitly states this point of view with many interesting details. For example he says: ‘They (the philosophers) say that absolute space and absolute time is not what we have defined previously because they are not invariant’, see *Al-Fisal*, p.75.

²⁶ The different views of Mutakallimūn of this concept of motion is presented in more details in the book of al-Ash’ari (see *Makalat* p. 21-25)

²⁷ Jammer, M., *The Philosophy of Quantum Theory*, (New York: John Wiley, 1976), p. 259.

²⁸ Polkinghorne, J. “Reason and Reality”, SPCK, London 1993.

We need to understand the true implications of the modern 20th century science as much as we need to understand the original doctrines of religion. Conceptions proposed by quantum theory and the mathematical structure of quantum mechanics are still in need of deeper understanding. The meaning of an “operator” in quantum mechanics is obscure as much as the meaning of unpredictability of measurements. The role played by the mathematical entities called “imaginary quantities” in physics, although being directly un-measurable entities, is something worth studying too on the conceptual level, in order to understand much of its practical naturalistic meaning²⁹. In theoretical physics most of us play the game of generating equations that sometime do not have clear explanations. An example of this is string theory. In general relativity and curved spacetime physics we are not ready yet to understand the full meaning and implications of a space-like universe. For this reason many of the black hole physicists were taken by surprise immediately after the declaration of Stephen Hawking last year that information is not completely lost when a particle falls into a black hole³⁰. In cosmology and despite the eminence of the big bang theory, we are still far from deciding whether the universe did have a start in time or whether it had an infinite extension in the past. The point singularity that contains all matter and energy that exists in our universe stands not only as an epistemological challenge but an ontological dilemma too. Indeed, science is firm and strong on the practical side of the story, but is still far from reaching a climax on the theoretical side. That is why we should not speculate much. Instead we should have some fixed basic principles and doctrines, some sort of an epistemic paradigm, while finding our way through science and religion.

Some issues of contemporary importance

In this section I will discuss some currently hot issues in the science and religion debate adopting the arguments of Kalām in the background of my suggestions. The aim here is to show some ideas in dealing with these issues and have a view of what the Islamic Kalām may have to say about it.

The Laws of physics, laws of nature and the divine action

Most of us talk about the laws that we discover in physics and call it the laws of nature. In fact this is a subtle point, and would imply some sort of a belief that we may or may not accept. To admit the existence of “natural laws” may implicitly mean to say that nature exhibits itself according to a reliable set of rules which controls its behavior. However, this may also mean that the laws of nature are some intrinsic properties that make nature behave spontaneously independent of any thing beyond it. Ancient philosophers assumed such intrinsic properties and today atheist scientists mean to say the same. This led in the past to some kind of reductionism already in the Aristotelian doctrines by assuming that God is just a prime mover. Presently it

²⁹ Hawking and Hartle have already found that the universe could have been in a state of an infinitely-extending imaginary time before the big bang.

³⁰ Hawking, S., GR17, Ireland, public lecture.

led to the God-of-the gaps and also to concede in a role for God only if a beginning in time for the universe is realized. But soon as Hawking deduced a way to avoid the temporal singularity in the history of the universe he immediately questioned the role of the creator? In fact the Hawking question would be inevitable for any one who sees no role for God except as a prime mover; no beginning, therefore will eliminate the role of the prime mover.

On the other hand some physicists, like Steven Weinberg, that are skeptic of any divine interaction with the world, wish to see God always acting with miracles or otherwise should abide by their understanding of the world.³¹ A miraculous universe is more likely to be chaotic, and a chaotic universe will be in less need for God although such a need cannot be fully eliminated. Should the universe been running miraculously the task of assuming the absence of an organizing and controlling global force would have been easier. At this point it seems to me that the argument of Weinberg is self-defeating; a fiery sword will suddenly appear in the auditorium to hit Steven Weinberg if and only if the world is completely working miraculously at random.

Glimpses of the divine action

Understanding divine action in the world will formulate our understanding of the divine attributes and capabilities, and consequently will shape our understanding of God. Therefore, it is a matter of utmost importance to play the game cautiously taking into consideration our limited intellectual capabilities and our renewable scientific knowledge.

Quantum theory provided us with a new realization of the world through new concepts and principles that seem to transform our conception of nature to become more abstract. Particles have been turned to have wave properties, which has weakened locality and produced the result that physical measurements of some parameters is undetermined. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle and the notion of virtual particles that was construed from it do allow for invisible and directly immeasurable virtual worlds and creatures surrounding us. The notion of the vacuum is, accordingly, different from the customary notion of nothingness.

The so-called “causal joint” in the divine action, is much sought rigorously in the quantum description of the world. At this point we should remember that quantum description of the world, even on the macroscopic level, is physically more accurate than the classical description. So, indeterminism and probabilistic measurements underlay the reality of our physical world. On the other hand, quantum description of the physical world demands the presence of “operators” that would effect the action of measurement or any move of the system. Though such operators are always understood to be mathematical entities within the structure of quantum theory, but also we know that physical observables are the corresponding expectation values of those operators.

The full description of the world on the smallest scale would need quantizing spacetime, a step which would reformulate the whole structure of both quantum theory and general relativity.

³¹ In a moment of despair during a debate with John Polkinghorne, Steven Weinberg said “And indeed at any moment we may get evidence of a supernatural supervisor of the universe. I mean suddenly in this auditorium a flaming sword may come and strike me for my impiety, and then we will know the answer”, SSQ 2002, Spain.

Some basic concepts may have to be altered accordingly and therefore, we should be careful on drawing final and stiff conclusions on modeling God, since God should be independent of all this. That is to say any comprehension of divinity and the divine action should be independent of the details of scientific theories; only we should take the evidence from science in as much as it would guide into comprehending divinity on a rational scale. But it should always be remembered that comprehending divinity is more a matter of faith rather than being a mathematical exercise; no one can prove or disprove the existence of god mathematically and since god is not a physical entity no one would be able to prove or disprove the existence of God through physical discoveries.

The Islamic description of God in the Qur'an is more abstract as compared with the description given in the Bible. But we should admit that both the Qur'an and the Bible do give some descriptions of the divine attributes that may look, at first sight, contradicting. This stems from the fact that holy books are not scientific books but contain a lot of metaphor.

Intelligibility of the world

Perhaps this is the most important issue in reconciling science and religion. The universe seems to be following a logical trend of causality and lawfulness. This leads to the belief that nature is driving itself with no need for an external drive. However, this may lead also to believe that the universe has a sort of cosmic mind that is driving it from within, such a mind is a global cosmic order. This was the type of God that Espinoza have conceived and in which Einstein believed. However, it remains uneasy task to realize how such cosmic order would get compiled in a sort of global cosmic consciousness from within the cosmos itself. Nevertheless the challenge it remains to understand why this intelligible world gets organized in such a way as to behave lawfully. Therefore, it seems that the lawfulness of the world is a strong indication of a purpose and some final destiny for it.

One may truly suggest that objects of the world do have some intrinsic nature, however there can be no clear reason how this nature would be a stand alone property taking into consideration that quantum physics have shown the fluctuating character of all the physical quantities. Here the principle of continual re-creation of Kalām does come into action. Fluctuations are caused by continual re-creation, justifying at the same time the divine intervention driving the world through its ever re-created properties.

The divine intervention need not to be miraculous at all since such a miraculous intervention will render the world unintelligible as I mentioned above. The Qur'an has stressed this fact in several verses. For example we read "*He created the Heavens and the Earth truthfully (justly)*". Here the word "truthfully" does not accurately describe the Arabic original word which is in the verse. In fact the original word intends to mean that God had created the world justly to be ordered and could be reasoned. This is why we see in some translations the words "with truth", "truthfully" comes in. In other translation of this verse we read "*He created the Heavens and the Earth for a genuine purpose*"³² (Sarwar 40:25).

³² Smith, C. C., *The Parallel Qur'an*, can be found at: <http://www.clay.smith.name>.

It is not feasible to rule out the role of some strict laws that governs the behavior of the world, however one can realize the action of such laws to be sustained by some supernatural agency that necessarily exist in order to operate these laws. The necessity that such an agency be supernatural is imposed by the fact that if the agency is to be natural then it has to abide by the same rules of nature and would therefore be in need for an operator *ad infinitum*.

Freedom of the world

Sir John Polkinghorne believes that “*God has given freedom to the whole world*”³³ and it is beautiful how he justified his claim. According to Polkinghorne we have *love* and *faithfulness*, as attributes of God, being reflected as *freedom* and *reliability* in the act of the world, which results in the *chance* and *necessity*. However, this will make some people say that “*the role of chance subverts the religious claim that there is a purpose at work in the world*”. But then if we would insist that chance (or the so-called happenstance) “*were to be operating within a context of lawful regularity*” the intent of “*chance*” will be lost. This is why it would be better to talk about “*contingency*” instead of taking about “*chance*”. We would say that the fruitfulness of the world is an inter-play between “*contingency and necessity*”, and this is what the old Mutakallimūn were saying. *Contingency* is a type of freedom that is given to the world to be as it is and to allow for the different possibilities or facets that it might be showing.

However, if we would claim that God have allocated certain “*intrinsic properties*” with nature that allow things to chose their own way into action, then this implies that nature has some sort of a decision to make at every action that takes place, but then this means that nature do have a mind. The question will arise as how nature would works under the auspices of divine action. Here again we face a God-of-the-gaps being hidden under the notion of “*chance and necessity*”. Although Polkinghorne would find that the “*fruitful interplay between chance and necessity is a reflection of the twin gifts of freedom and reliability which God has given to the world, gifts which are the reflections of his combined nature of love and faithfulness*” but unfortunately such mystic reflections of this serious ontological matter would not help resolving the problem of the conflict between God’s choice and nature’s choice. Unless we mean to say that nature’s Will may win over the divine Will in order to explain the existence of natural evil, like cancer, I find no reason why the divine Will should supersede nature’s will. But then if we would accept this kind of conflict between nature and God we do implicitly assume the existence of more than God. It is wise to admit that this problem is one of the most serious problems that arise in connection with the required reconciliation between science and religion. The importance and the challenge of this problem come from the fact that we see nature behaving, practically, according to reliable laws. Nature even can adapt itself and choose to change the environment so as to develop a balance that comes in favor of certain intended goals, this which led to the *Gia* hypothesis. An example of this is the adaptation of the environment that took place in Earth’s atmosphere long time ago in order to get the proper percentage of oxygen and nitrogen in air to make life possible.

³³ Polkinghorne, J., *God's Action in the World*, J.K. Russell Fellowship Lecture, 1990.

The better alternative, I find, is to assume that nature has no freedom, and that it would be correct to say that it has given full submittal to God. In this context a sort of divine “democracy” would be at work instead of a divine tyranny. This submittal comes through obeying God’s orders; being the operator and the coordinator of the laws that nature would abide with. Nature has been given the right to expose itself through its allocated properties and qualities and that God operates it and make the final decision. So God, the lawgiver, have designed the world in such a way as to have things being associated with certain properties that characterize what we call the “nature of things”. But then such nature will be acting under the auspices of the divine Will, through the need for operation and coordination. Here comes the necessity to have the world getting created anew every moment; the divine action taking place through operating the given law. This way we can realize the true meaning of the divine providence.

But then remains the question as how the merciful and compassionate God would order an evil act of nature to take place? It seems to me that God did not create this world to entertain humans; otherwise, he would not have given the qualities and laws that would enable natural evil to happen in the first place. Rather it seems that the challenge put forward for human in this world is to behave within the given freedom and capabilities, in order to achieve the goal that he is tasked to achieve in this world. This goal is the actual destiny behind the whole game of creation and development of mankind and the universe. Theories of cosmology tells us that there could be many worlds empty of any developed life and tells us that our universe is very accurately fine-tuned to make our existence possible. Therefore, surely human is destined to do something of great value that justifies his existence in a world with all such a delicacy and complication.

One final point is due and that is to say that the laws of physics are, in fact, our realizations for how the world would act; in no way these laws necessarily are expressing the true and actual divine algorithms. These laws are our algorithms for the world. Therefore I would say that we are far from conceiving how the “mind of god” works, and we are far from being able to “catch God at work”.³⁴

Human Freedom

Human freedom is different from natural freedom because human freedom implies having his own intrinsic will; he can make his own choices without the need for some external body to dictate him. However, all his physical acts are in need for an operator/coordinator no matter if we assume the top-down or the bottom-up causation model. Nevertheless, human free-will is superior to that of the rest of the world for one good reason; human is an intelligent being that is curious and able to discover, analyze, and construct.

Human free-will is validated by practical realization of actions. If these actions are not realized in practice human free-will would have no practical value. Since the validation of

³⁴ This is in reference to Einstein’s words on his death bed.

human *will* would go through natural effects and actions, therefore it is reasonable to assume that that human *will* is bound with the global destiny of the world.

Perhaps the best idea that I find plausible in contemporary debates about the divine action is the idea which was proposed by John Polkinghorne in which he assumes that God interacts with the world through active information input, not an energy input. The idea is intriguing, especially within the Islamic arena of thoughts. God always interact with the world through his word (command, order). For example according to the Qur'an Jesus was the Word of God revealed to Mary. God is described to be knowledgeable and experienced; the one who knows all that is hidden. However, it does not seem that Polkinghorne have suggested any mechanism to realize such information transfer. Admittedly, it is not easy to suggest a mechanism of information transfer between two worlds one physical and the other is being non-physical. One major problem is temporality which is not a common factor between both. Nevertheless, this idea may be quite generic and can explain many things. However, we do not have to stick to the notion of a personal God to realize a possible mechanism of information transfer since the notion of a personal God would induce that he may be a localized body.

The Multiverse Proposal

During the second half of the last century some physicists turned their attention to the accuracy with which the values of universal constants (like the mass of the electron, Planck constant, the gravitational constant, the charge of the electron...etc) has been set. They discussed the sensitivity of the structure and the property of our universe to these values. They found that a life accommodating universe is surely very sensitive to small variation in the values of these universal constants. This was called fine-tuning.

In order to explain the fine tuning which is observed in the construction of the world and the due precision by which nature is seen to be operated, some physicists proposed that our world is actually not the only universe existing but it is only one state out of infinite number of worlds that are existing simultaneously. These were called the parallel universes. All such worlds may be lifeless but ours. Consequently, the proponents of this multiverse hypothesis see nothing astonishing in the fine-tuning of the world since it would be a matter of well-expected chance then to have a fine-tuned world like ours. The multiverse hypothesis gained publicity through an article by Max Tegmark published in *Scientific American*³⁵. However, much of the claims that this multiverse is a reality are unfounded; there is no rigorous proof of such states. The primary source for these speculations is the theory of chaotic inflation proposed by Andre Linde. The other claimed source is the Everret interpretation of quantum mechanics which allows for many other worlds to exist in which all other possible values of a physical measurement do exist. However, it is important to know that the Everret many worlds interpretation applies to quantum (microscopic) systems not classical (macroscopic) systems. On the other hand this is a complicated philosophical problem that cannot be verified by direct experiments.

³⁵ Tegmark, M., "Parallell Universes", *Scientific American*, May 2003.

There are some basic scientific objections to the possibility of having all other universes really existing at the same time. The most important of these objections may be the orthogonality condition. By this condition quantum systems belonging to the same Hermitian operator with different eigenvalues (different values for the same observable) have to be orthogonal. This implies that no two quantum systems of this sort can exist simultaneously. Such a condition is necessary in quantum mechanics in order to guarantee the repeatability of physical measurements. In any case, having our universe which is a very low probability event being realized, the question still remains as who has decided that this possible universe should exist rather than another, or rather than nothing at all? One may argue that here on the planet Earth life has developed, whereas there are many other planets that cannot accommodate life. The very existence of the many lifeless planets is suggestive of the possibility of existence of many lifeless universes. However, a counter argument will say that the non-existence of life on other planets is actually caused by the fact that the conditions for life to exist are very subtle and sensitive.

Having all other planets abiding by the same laws of physics would cause the planet on which life exist to be distinctive. But should different planets obey different laws of physics we cannot then quietly justify the non-existences of life on those planets. Similarly, a multiverse theory should require all other hypothetical universes to abide by the same laws that our universe abide with, otherwise we cannot understand why life should not exist in them. However, no strong scientific argument exist that can confirm that the other hypothetical universes do follow the same laws of physics as ours, to the contrary the hypothesis of multiverse suggests that the laws of physics may not be the same in other universes and this is the argument which is frequently used to justify the accurate selection of a set of laws that will make life possible on Earth in our universe.

One other good question which comes across the hypothesis of multiverse is that which was raised by Einstein and says whether "God had any choice when creating this universe".³⁶ Some physicists find that the answer to this question could be yes in the light of the multiverse hypothesis³⁷. The Qur'an does suggest that God had and always have the choice, however such a possibility does not necessarily imply that God have such universes ready under his gloves.

I would say that a multiverse may exist only under fully chaotic miraculous ruling. God not only have created this world justly and for a purpose, but have set some built-in mechanisms to safeguard that the world remains to be comprehensible.

In summary I would say that Islamic Kalām can play a positive contemporary role in the science and religion dialogue, some of its arguments do have sound contemporary value and are actually not bound to be specifically Islamic since most of these arguments are rationally based. However, since Kalām lays heavily on the basic Islamic creed which has much in common with the basic beliefs of the Jewish and Christian faith, it may be legitimate to designate the Islamic Kalām as being part of the Abrahamic theology, but not necessarily to be exclusively Islamic. From this point of view I can see that there is much wealth of thoughts in Kalām to make use of and there is much to learn from it too.

³⁶ A. Einstein, quoted in www.humboldt1.com/~gralsto/einstein/quotes.html.

³⁷ Davies, P.C.W, "Multiverse Cosmological Models", in *Mod. Phys. Lett. A*19: 727-744, 2004.

Literatenkultur und Daoismus – Anmerkungen zur Rolle der daoistischen Religion im Leben und Wirken chinesischer Literati

Volker Olles

Das Verhältnis zwischen den Literaten und dem Daoismus in der traditionellen Kultur Chinas ist nur auf den ersten Blick ein schöngeistiges Thema, das mit Dichtung, Malerei und unkonventionellen Lebens- und Denkweisen zu tun hat. Vor allem dem so genannten „philosophischen Daoismus“ (*Daojia* 道家), der hauptsächlich von den klassischen Werken *Laozi* 老子 und *Zhuangzi* 莊子 repräsentiert wird, wurde als Quelle der künstlerischen Inspiration und der chinesischen Geisteskultur einige Beachtung zuteil.¹ Naturverbundenheit und die Ablehnung gesellschaftlicher Konventionen bis hin zu einem Streben nach „Freiheit und Anarchie“ in gewissen chinesischen Gelehrtenkreisen wurden auf den Einfluss dieses daoistischen Denkens zurückgeführt.² Außerdem wird der Daoismus – neben dem Buddhismus – mitunter als geistiger Hintergrund für den Rückzug in ein selbst gewähltes Eremitenleben dargestellt, für das sich viele Gelehrte in bestimmten Phasen der Geschichte Chinas aus persönlichen oder politischen Gründen entschieden.³ Vielfach wurde auch der daoistische Einfluss auf die „Literatenmalerei“ (*shiren hua* 士人畫) thematisiert. Diese nichtakademische Kunstform verkörperte seit dem 10. Jahrhundert das Amateurideal der Literaten und wurde damals auch zum Gegenstand gelehrter Abhandlungen.⁴ All diese Teilaspekte der daoistischen Kultur sind sowohl in der wissenschaftlichen als auch in der populärwissenschaftlichen Literatur gut dokumentiert.

Viel weniger beachtet wurde hingegen das Verhältnis der chinesischen Gelehrten zur daoistischen Religion (*Daojiao* 道教). Ein Grund dafür ist sicherlich ein altes Vorurteil, nach dem es sich beim Daoismus lediglich um einen „Volks glauben“ handeln soll, der mit der Welt der Literati, wie ich die chinesischen Gelehrten und Gelehrten-Beamten im Folgenden bezeichnen möchte, nur wenig zu tun hat.⁵ Der Daoismus nahm im 2. Jahrhundert n.Chr. allmählich die Form einer organisierten Religion an, die im Verlauf ihrer historischen Entwicklung verschiedene Lehrrichtungen und Schrifttraditionen hervorgebracht und auch die „klassischen“ Lehren des *Laozi* und *Zhuangzi* in ihrer eigenen Interpretation weitergeführt hat.

¹ Siehe z.B. CHANG CHUNG-YUAN: *Tao, Zen und schöpferische Kraft* (übers. v. STEPHAN SCHUHMACHER). Köln: Diederichs, ⁵1987.

² Siehe WOLFGANG BAUER: *China und die Hoffnung auf Glück*. München: dtv, ³1989, S. 188-215.

³ So z.B. am Beginn der Südlichen Dynastien (4./5. Jh.); s. CHARLES HOLCOMBE: *In the Shadow of the Han – Literati Thought and Society at the Beginning of the Southern Dynasties*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, S. 85-134.

⁴ Siehe SUSAN BUSH: *The Chinese Literati on Painting – Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636)*. Cambridge/Mass.; London: Harvard University, ²1978. Eine Einzelstudie zu einem Literatenmaler der Yuan-Zeit (1279-1368) ist KONRAD WEGMANN: *Kuo Pi – ein Beamter und Literaten-Maler der Mongolenzeit* (Dissertation Universität München). Eigenverlag, 1967.

⁵ Siehe z.B. HOLCOMBE 1994, S. 96.

Der Daoismus in seiner religiösen Form wird auch in der Gegenwart praktiziert und ist als einzige einheimische Religion ein wichtiger Bestandteil der chinesischen Kultur und Lebensweise. In der Zeit des chinesischen Kaiserreiches (bis 1911) waren viele Literati eng mit der daoistischen Religion verbunden, und bei diesen Gelehrten handelte es sich keineswegs um weltflüchtige Eremiten oder erfolglose Prüfungskandidaten.

An dieser Stelle möchte ich zunächst auf den Terminus „Literati“ und die damit bezeichnete Personengruppe eingehen. Der Begriff „Literat“ bezeichnet in der deutschen Sprache seit dem 18. Jahrhundert den hauptberuflichen Schriftsteller, und seit etwa 1840 wird die Bezeichnung auch im abwertenden Sinne für einen unschöpferischen, ästhetisierenden Schreiber verwendet.⁶ Es mag daher ein wenig irreführend erscheinen, einen Angehörigen der gebildeten Elite des kaiserlichen China als „Literaten“ zu bezeichnen. Ursprünglich steht dieser Begriff (von lateinisch *litteratus* = schriftkundig, gelehrt) aber für den wissenschaftlich gebildeten Menschen, den Gelehrten. In dieser Grundbedeutung wird der Terminus vor allem in der englischsprachigen Sekundärliteratur verwendet, wo er in der Pluralform „Literati“ die Angehörigen der Bildungselite Chinas bezeichnet, die durch ein staatliches Prüfungssystem ausgewählt und in der Zivilverwaltung eingesetzt wurden. Auch ich habe mich für diese Form der Bezeichnung entschieden.

In der chinesischen Sprache gibt es mehrere Termini, die mit „Literatus“ bzw. „Literati“ übersetzt werden können. Am wichtigsten ist der Begriff *shi* 士, der in der Frühlings- und Herbst-Periode der Zhou-Zeit (770-476 v.Chr.) Ritter bzw. Krieger sowie Männer mit speziellen Kenntnissen wie Schreiben, Ritualwesen oder Astrologie bezeichnete. Letztere, die auch *ru* 儒 genannt wurden, waren ursprünglich Priester und anscheinend Nachkommen der Shang-Dynastie (ca. 16. Jh.-1066 v. Chr.). Die *shi* gehörten zur unteren Schicht der Aristokratie. In der Zeit der Streitenden Reiche (475-221 v. Chr.) wurden sie dem gewöhnlichen Volk zugeordnet, wo sie die höchste Position unter den klassischen vier Ständen einnahmen (*simin zhi shou* 四民之首). Es gab *shi* 士 (Gelehrte), *nong* 農 (Bauern), *gong* 工 (Handwerker) und *shang* 商 (Händler). Die *shi* waren also eine Art „Schnittstelle“ zwischen Herrschern und Beherrschten und wurden im Staatsdienst eingesetzt.

Ihre Funktion in verschiedenen Ämtern seit den Dynastien Qin und Han (221 v.Chr.-220 n.Chr.) führte zur Bildung der spezifischen Klasse der *shi dafu* 士大夫, der „Literaten-Beamten“. Seit der Sui-Dynastie (581-618) erfolgte ihre Auswahl durch das staatliche Prüfungssystem, und ungefähr seit der Südlichen Song-Dynastie (1127-1279) kennt man das Wort *shi* als allgemeine Bezeichnung für eine gelehrte Person („Literatus“).⁷ Auch der bereits genannte Begriff *ru* wird mitunter als „Literatus“ übersetzt. Seine genaue Bedeutung ist „Konfuzianer“ bzw. „Gelehrter der konfuzianischen Texte“.⁸ Da der Erfolg in den staatlichen Prüfungen die genaue Kenntnis der konfuzianischen Klassiker voraussetzte, waren alle Literati auch von konfuzianischem

⁶ GERO VON WILPERT: *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*. Stuttgart: Kröner, 1979, S. 463.

⁷ Siehe MARTIN W. HUANG: *Literati and Self-Re/Presentation – Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Chinese Novel*. Stanford/Cal.: Stanford University, 1995, S. 26 f.; SHERRY J. MOU (Hrsg.): *Presence and Presentation – Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, S. XVII.

⁸ STEPHEN J. RODDY: *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations in Late Imperial China*. Stanford/Cal.: Stanford University, 1998, Einleitung.

Gedankengut beeinflusst. Das sollte aber nicht zu der Annahme verleiten, die Kultur und Denkweise der Literati sei ausschließlich vom Konfuzianismus geprägt gewesen. Die Geisteskultur der chinesischen Elite ließ eine große Vielfalt erkennen, an der auch Buddhismus und Daoismus ihren Anteil hatten.

Ein eher inoffizieller Terminus für Literati ist *wenren* 文人 („Kulturmensch“). Der Begriff bezeichnete im weitesten Sinne Gelehrte, die einen verfeinerten Lebensstil besaßen, und seit der mongolischen Yuan-Dynastie (1279-1368) kennt man *wenren* als Bezeichnung für Literati ohne Amt, die oft auch in Opposition zu den Fremdherrschern standen.⁹ Abschließend sei darauf hingewiesen, dass es – mit gewissen Einschränkungen – durchaus möglich ist, die Literati der Kaiserzeit als Vorläufer der modernen Intellektuellen Chinas, der *zhishi fenzi* 知識分子, zu betrachten.¹⁰

Bis in die Gegenwart hat sich – auch innerhalb der Sinologie – vielfach das Vorurteil gehalten, die daoistische Religion sei in erster Linie eine Ansammlung absurder abergläubischer Praktiken, die mit Elementen des Buddhismus angereichert wurde und die religiösen Bedürfnisse der Ungebildeten befriedigen sollte. Ein unsinniges Streben nach körperlicher Unsterblichkeit stehe im krassen Widerspruch zu einem ursprünglichen „reinen“ und „philosophischen“ Daoismus, der in den Werken von Lao Zi und Zhuang Zi zu finden sei. Diesen „philosophischen“ Daoismus, der in der Zeit der Streitenden Reiche (475-221 v.Chr.) geblüht haben soll, hat es als in sich geschlossene Schule nie gegeben, und auch die beiden Klassiker *Laozi* und *Zhuangzi* haben erst durch das Zutun von Herausgebern und Kommentatoren in viel späterer Zeit ihre heutige Form erhalten.¹¹ Was die daoistische Religion betrifft, so ist die zum Teil bis heute gepflegte Vorstellung vom „volkstümlichen Daoismus“, dessen Anhängerschaft sich aus Scharlatanen und Rebellen rekrutierte, ein Konstrukt, das auf Darstellungen von konfuzianischen Gelehrten sowie westlichen Übersetzern des 19. Jahrhunderts, wie z.B. James Legge, basiert.¹²

Tatsächlich stehen Theorie und Praxis der daoistischen Religion keineswegs im Gegensatz zum Konfuzianismus und seinen Werten. Es sind in erster Linie Vorstellungen von spiritueller Transzendenz und disziplinierter Selbstkultivierung, die die Grundlagen des Daoismus und der ca. 1500 Texte des erhaltenen daoistischen Kanons, des *Daozang* 道藏 (15. Jh.), bilden. Diese Konzepte reichen nicht nur zu vereinzelt Andeutungen in den daoistischen Werken *Laozi* und *Zhuangzi* zurück. Sie sind auch in weniger bekannten Texten wie der „Inneren Kultivierung“ (*Neiye* 內業, d.i. Kap. 49 des *Guanzi* 管子) und sogar in dem konfuzianischen Klassiker *Mengzi* 孟子 (2. Buch, Teil A, 2. Abschnitt), wo die „flutende Lebenskraft“ (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣) beschrieben wird, zu finden.¹³ Diverse Methoden der Selbstkultivierung sind im Konfuzianismus, Daoismus und Buddhismus bekannt, und sie stellen ein zentrales

⁹ HUANG 1995, S. 29.

¹⁰ WANG GUNGU: *Ideas Won't Keep – the Struggle for China's Future*. Singapur: Eastern Universities Press, 2003, S. 129-147 (Kap. 6).

¹¹ RUSSELL KIRKLAND: *Taoism – the Enduring Tradition*. New York/London: Routledge, 2004, S. 19-22, 33-39.

¹² Siehe NORMAN J. GIRARDOT: *The Victorian Translation of China – James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage*. Berkeley: University of California, 2002.

¹³ KIRKLAND 2004, S. 39-52, zu *Mengzi* s. S. 42 ebd.

verbindendes Element dieser „Drei Lehren“ (*san jiao* 三教) innerhalb der traditionellen Kultur Chinas dar. Die Tradition der daoistischen Selbstkultivierung, die insbesondere von der im 12. Jahrhundert begründeten Lehrrichtung der „Vollkommenen Verwirklichung“ (*Quanzhen* 全真) auch in der Gegenwart gepflegt wird, ist fest in der Kultur der Literati verwurzelt.

Ein prominentes Beispiel für Literati mit daoistischen Ambitionen ist der geniale Dichter, Maler, Kalligraph und Staatsbeamte Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), der besser unter dem Pseudonym Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 bekannt ist. Su wurde in seiner Kindheit, die er in seiner Heimat Meishan 眉山 in der heutigen Provinz Sichuan verlebte, drei Jahre lang von einem Daoisten unterrichtet. Seine lebenslange Neigung zum Daoismus kann in vielen Briefen und Werken belegt werden.¹⁴ Neben berühmten Texten wie den „Aufzeichnungen über die Terrasse der Losgelöstheit“ (*Chaoran tai ji* 超然臺記) von 1074, die den Einfluss daoistischen Gedankenguts erkennen lassen, verfasste Su auch Abhandlungen über praktische Erfahrungen mit daoistischen Übungen zur Pflege der Lebenskraft. Wann immer seine amtlichen und gesellschaftlichen Verpflichtungen ihm Zeit dazu ließen, widmete sich Su Shi dem Studium daoistischer Texte. Der chinesische Forscher ZHONG LAIYIN weist in seiner Studie über Su Shi und den Daoismus überzeugend nach, dass Su daoistische Methoden der Selbstkultivierung praktizierte, die in der Tradition der „Inneren Alchemie“ (*neidan* 內丹) stehen, wobei es sich um Übungssysteme handelt, die physiologische und meditative Elemente verbinden und die Erreichung spiritueller Transzendenz anstreben.¹⁵ ZHONG korrigiert in diesem Zusammenhang die Fehlinterpretationen von LIN YUTANG 林語堂 (1895-1976), der die *neidan*-Terminologie nicht kannte und Su Shi als Buddhisten und Yoga-Praktizierenden bezeichnete.¹⁶

Enge Beziehungen zwischen Literati und dem Daoismus lassen sich auch auf einer weniger esoterischen Ebene beobachten und studieren. Es ist bekannt, dass mehrere chinesische Kaiser und auch Herrscher nicht-chinesischer Abstammung die daoistische Religion gezielt förderten, um ihre Herrschaft rituell zu legitimieren. Die Harmonie mit den Kräften des Kosmos sollte gesichert werden, um Frieden und Prosperität im Reich zu bewahren. An diesem Austausch zwischen Daoismus und Staatskult waren selbstverständlich immer Literati beteiligt. Doch unabhängig von dieser politischen Seite der Religiosität hatten zahlreiche Gelehrte und Staatsbeamte auch ein ganz persönliches Verhältnis zum Daoismus: Sie traten z.B. als Stifter von daoistischen Heiligtümern auf oder ließen zu verschiedenen Anlässen von den Liturgie-Experten dieser Religion Rituale durchführen.

In diesem Zusammenhang taucht in den schriftlichen Quellen immer wieder ein Ausdruck auf, der bis heute in der chinesischen Religiosität – besonders in der Interaktion von religiösen Institutionen und Laienanhängern – eine außerordentlich wichtige Rolle spielt: der Begriff *gongde* 功德, der wörtlich „Verdienste und Tugenden“ bedeutet und das religiöse Verdienst von

¹⁴ Eine chinesische Studie ist speziell diesem Thema gewidmet: ZHONG LAIYIN 鍾來因: *Su Shi yu Daojia Daojiao* 蘇軾與道家道教. Taipei: Xuesheng, 1990.

¹⁵ Zur Tradition des *neidan* s. ISABELLE ROBINET: *Geschichte des Taoismus*. München: Diederichs, 1995, S. 303-357.

¹⁶ ZHONG 1990, S. 324-330.

Einzelpersonen oder Gruppen bezeichnet. Zwei Inschriften von daoistischen heiligen Bergen in der Provinz Sichuan sollen hier als Beispiele dienen.

Der Text „Aufzeichnungen über Verdienste und Tugenden für die Instandsetzung der daoistischen Tempel auf dem Berg Qingcheng“ (*Xiu Qingcheng Shan zhuguan gongde ji* 修青城山諸觀功德記) wurde von dem Hof-Daoisten DU GUANGTING 杜光庭 (850-933) verfasst. Im Jahre 895 wurde die Abhandlung in Stein gemeißelt, und diese Stele stellte man in einem Tempel am Fuß des Berges auf. Der Text ist u.a. in der Sammlung *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 erhalten¹⁷ und liegt auch in einer englischen Übersetzung von THOMAS H. PETERSON vor.¹⁸ DU GUANGTING beschreibt zunächst den geschichtlichen, geographischen und hagiographischen Hintergrund des Berges. Daran schließt sich eine Art von Elogium an, eine Lobrede auf einen verstorbenen Magistraten bzw. Vorsteher des Kreises Qingcheng, der durch umfassende Renovierungen von Tempeln auf dem heiligen Berg religiöse Verdienste angesammelt hatte. Anlass für diese Aufzeichnung war möglicherweise ein zu Ehren des Verstorbenen von DU GUANGTING durchgeführtes „Ritual der Verdienste und Tugenden“, das auch mit dem Terminus *gongde* bezeichnet werden kann. Diese Art von Ritualen hat z.B. JOHN LAGERWEY beschrieben.¹⁹ Im Jahre 893 ermöglichte der Kreisvorsteher namens Mo Tingyi 莫廷乂 die Renovierung der zwei Haupttempel des Berges sowie einiger kleinerer Anlagen. Die Arbeiten dauerten zwei Jahre, und Mo verwendete dabei keine öffentlichen Gelder. Obwohl das wichtigste Verdienst von Mo Tingyi die Renovierung der daoistischen Tempel war, was in der Inschrift ausführlich beschrieben wird, betont DU GUANGTING zugleich die konfuzianischen Tugenden des Magistrats und seine Leistungen als Staatsbeamter. Dieser Bereich wird in der Inschrift allerdings transzendiert, und Mo wird quasi in die himmlischen Sphären des Daoismus erhoben, d.h. in der Idee des religiösen Verdienstes verbindet sich das Streben nach gesellschaftlicher Anerkennung mit spiritueller Hoffnung. Dieser Text aus der späten Tang-Zeit ist also gleichzeitig ein Denkmal und ein Dokument über die religiöse Handlung, die das gute Werk des Stifters darstellt.

DU GUANGTING lobt in seiner Inschrift auch die Erfolge, die Mo in seinen Ämtern verbuchen konnte. Er war u.a. erfolgreich bei der Bekämpfung von Flutkatastrophen und sozialen Ungerechtigkeiten und ging gegen eine übermäßige Besteuerung der Bevölkerung vor. Der Staatsbeamte Mo Tingyi, der als erfolgreiches und etabliertes Mitglied der Literati-Schicht bezeichnet werden kann, wird als Beispiel für die Verwirklichung von Verdiensten und Tugenden im daoistischen und konfuzianischen Sinne präsentiert. DU GUANGTING erläutert dabei die Begriffe „Verdienst“ (*gong* 功) und „Tugend“ (*de* 德), deren Kombination *gongde* 功德 als Standard-Ausdruck religiöse Verdienste bezeichnet, einzeln: Im Daoismus – so der Text – erstreckte sich das Verdienst auf [die Prinzipien von] Dunkelheit und Licht, Tod und Leben, während die Tugend mit dem Hegen und Nähren [aller Wesen] verbunden sei. Im Konfuzianismus schütze das Verdienst vor großem Unheil und die Tugend widerstehe großen

¹⁷ (Qing 清) DONG GAO 董誥 u.a. (Komp.): *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, juan 932.

¹⁸ „Recorded for the Ritual of Merit and Virtue for Repairing the Various Observatories of Ch'ing-ch'eng Mountain“, in: *Taoist Resources* 6.1 (1995), S. 41-55.

¹⁹ *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, New York: MacMillan, 1987, S. 170 f. LAGERWEY schreibt „Ritual of Merit“.

Katastrophen. Im chinesischen Original: *Zai Dao ze gong ji youming, de jian fuyu; zai Ru ze gong han dahuan, de yu dazai* 在道則功及幽明, 德兼覆育; 在儒則功捍大患, 德禦大災.²⁰ Der Terminus *gongde* ist also schon in dieser Quelle aus der späten Tang-Zeit in der Bedeutung des religiösen Verdienstes belegt, und DU GUANGTING erläutert durch seine Umschreibung der Einzelbegriffe die Etymologie dieses Ausdrucks.

Eine nahtlose Verschmelzung von religiöser Tradition und Literati-Gelehrsamkeit offenbart sich in einer Inschrift von 1858, die ich in einem daoistischen Tempel im Kreis Pujiang 蒲江 entdeckte und übersetzte.²¹ Auch in dieser Quelle spielt das religiöse Verdienst eine zentrale Rolle. Die Stele mit der Inschrift befindet sich auf einem Berg, der zu den frühesten Zentren der daoistischen Religion gehört, und der Text erzählt die Geschichte der Entstehung eines Tempelgebäudes. Neben einigen Fakten und Details, die das Gebäude selbst und die Baumstände betreffen, erhellt die Inschrift sowohl die Bedeutung der Lokalität innerhalb der religiösen Tradition mit ihren Legenden als auch die konkrete Rolle, die dieser Ort für die einheimischen Literati spielte. Der Autor, ein Literat aus der Kreisstadt, umschreibt die Stätte als „Unsterblichen-Berg“ (*xianshan* 仙山), der für die Gelehrten eine beliebte Zuflucht und Quelle der literarischen Inspiration war. Als Initiator des Bauprojekts lernen wir einen konfuzianischen Lehrmeister kennen, bei dem der Autor der Inschrift früher studiert hatte und für den die Errichtung dieses Gebäudes die Erfüllung seines letzten Wunsches war. Das Bauwerk wurde als ergänzender Bestandteil einem daoistischen Tempel hinzugefügt, und neben dem Lehrmeister waren auch weitere Literati aus Pujiang finanziell an dem Projekt beteiligt. Das Gebäude selbst – der „Pavillon, der sich in die Himmelsweiten erhebt“ (*Lingxu Ge* 凌虛閣) – dokumentiert vollendet die gegenseitige Ergänzung von konfuzianisch geprägter Gelehrsamkeit und daoistischer Religiosität. Obwohl es auch Studierzimmer für Examensanwärter enthielt, war seine Hauptfunktion die einer daoistischen Kultstätte mit entsprechenden Statuen und Räumlichkeiten.

Natürlich war das geistige und politische Umfeld der Literati im 19. Jahrhundert von dem des 9. Jahrhunderts sehr verschieden. In der späten Qing-Zeit (1644-1911) hatte das traditionelle Weltbild der Elite Chinas schon einige Erschütterungen erlebt. Das Eindringen ausländischer Mächte sowie innere Unruhen machten dem alten Kaiserreich zu schaffen; die Niederlage im Opiumkrieg (1839-1842) und der verheerende Taiping-Aufstand (1850-1864), um nur zwei Beispiele zu nennen, fügten China nicht nur politische Wunden zu. In diesem Zusammenhang fanden die Literati durch ihr Engagement in daoistischen Heiligtümern sicher nicht nur religiösen Trost, sondern auch eine Bestätigung ihrer eigenen kulturellen Identität.

Im Text zitiert der Autor einen Brief seines Lehrmeisters, in dem dieser seinen Schüler mit der Ausführung des Bauprojekts beauftragt. Nach einer Aufzählung der daoistischen Heiligen, die mit dem Berg verbunden sind, erwähnt der Lehrmeister, dass sich im 18. Jahrhundert zwei Gelehrte aus der Region zu intensiven Studien auf den Berg zurückgezogen hatten. Er stellt fest: „Beide erreichten hohe Prüfungsgrade, gingen in den Staatsdienst und wurden berühmte Beamte.“

²⁰ CHEN YUAN 陳垣 (Komp.): *Daojia jinshi lue* 道家金石略. Beijing: Wenwu, 1988, S. 193 f.

²¹ VOLKER OLLES: „Der unsterbliche Lehrmeister: Chinesische Literati und religiöses Verdienst in einer Inschrift von 1858 auf einem heiligen Berg der Daoisten im Kreis Pujiang (Provinz Sichuan)“, in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 153/2 (2003), S. 395-416.

In dieser Hinsicht hat der Berg großen Anteil an der Heranbildung von Gelehrten“ (OLLES 2003, S. 406). Im weiteren Textverlauf schlägt er die Errichtung des Gebäudes an einer nach geomantischen Gesichtspunkten günstigen Stelle vor. Entstehen soll eine Tempelhalle, die dem daoistischen Patriarchen Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓, den Gottheiten Wenchang 文昌 und Guandi 關帝 sowie dem Gott des Literatenglücks, Kuishen 魁神, geweiht ist. Weiter heißt es in dem Brief: „Ferner könnte man in den beiden Wandelgängen [im Ost- und Westteil des Gebäudes] einige Studierstuben einrichten. Kommen dann Studenten und Prüfungsanwärter an diesen Ort, um ihren Studien nachzugehen, so wird der klare Klang ihrer Rezitationen aus den klassischen Schriften im Himmel die Gottheiten und auf Erden den Berggeist erschüttern“ (ebd., S. 406 f.).

Der übrige Text der Inschrift beschreibt ausführlich, wie das Bauvorhaben geplant und verwirklicht wurde. Es entstand ein großzügiges Gebäude, das neben Statuen der erwähnten Gottheiten sowie weiterer daoistischer Heiliger eine Vorhalle zur Verrichtung religiöser Andachten und sechs Studierzimmer enthielt. Bei aller Betonung von Gelehrsamkeit stand doch das religiöse Verdienst eindeutig im Mittelpunkt des Unterfangens. Der Text soll hier für sich selbst sprechen: „Kurz nachdem sein Verdienst zur Vollendung geführt worden war, verschied mein Lehrmeister. Doch ich erinnere mich, dass mein Lehrer selbst zu der Zeit, als seine Krankheit schon sehr schwer war, nie über familiäre [Angelegenheiten] sprach [...]; seine Pläne und Sorgen galten einzig und allein dem verdienstvollen Werk [des Tempelbaus] auf diesem Berg. Nun ist mein Meister zwar von uns gegangen, aber seine wahre Seele wird gewiss für immer auf diesem Unsterblichen-Berg verweilen“ (ebd., S. 408).

Viele Literati hatten eine besondere Beziehung zum heiligen Raum, und sie unterstützten großzügig daoistische und auch buddhistische Tempel. Mitunter kam es auch im Gedankengebäude und in den Schriften solcher Persönlichkeiten zu einer Vermischung von konfuzianischen, daoistischen und buddhistischen Ideen. Als herausragendes Beispiel für die Region von Sichuan kann der Akademiker Liu Yuan 劉沅 (1768-1856) genannt werden, der auf der Basis von konfuzianischer Ethik und daoistischer „Innerer Alchemie“ (*neidan*) eine eigene Lehre entwickelte, die im 19. Jahrhundert in eine volksreligiöse Bewegung namens *Liumen jiao* 劉門教 mündete. In zahlreichen Tempelanlagen der Provinzhauptstadt Chengdu 成都 und ihrer Umgebung veranstalteten die Anhänger der „Liu-Lehre“ an bestimmten Feiertagen große Zeremonien, deren Liturgie sich aus daoistischen Ritualen zusammensetzte.

Wie viele Literati in der späten Qing-Zeit, als die traditionellen Verwaltungsstrukturen zum Teil schon ihre Funktion verloren hatten, war auch Liu Yuan nie in einem offiziellen Amt tätig. Obwohl er im Bereich der konfuzianischen Gelehrsamkeit sehr erfolgreich war, hat er das Interesse an einer Karriere als Staatsbeamter verloren, nachdem er 1792 die Provinzialprüfung bestanden und den Grad eines „Bakkalaureus“ (*juren* 舉人) errungen hatte. Er trug zunächst als Lehrer einer Privatschule zum Unterhalt seiner Familie bei. 1826, im Alter von 58 Jahren, lehnte Liu ein Amt als Kreisvorsteher in der Provinz Hubei ab, worauf er *pro forma* die Stelle eines Archivars an der kaiserlichen Akademie erhielt, womit allerdings keinerlei Amtspflichten verbunden waren. Liu Yuan blieb in seiner Heimat, wo er – so seine Biographie – „in Zurückgezogenheit lebte und Belehrungen erteilte.“ Er hatte ungefähr tausend Schüler, von denen viele hohe akademische Grade erreichten. Vom Privatgelehrten entwickelte sich Liu Yuan

zum Begründer einer religiösen Gemeinschaft, die von seinen Nachkommen weitergeführt wurde und bis zur Gründung der Volksrepublik China im Jahre 1949 aktiv war. 23 Werke von Liu Yuan, hauptsächlich Kommentare zu konfuzianischen Klassikern und philosophische Abhandlungen, wurden als Sammelwerk publiziert. Nicht in dieser Sammlung enthalten sind hingegen 50 Textvorlagen für Rituale, die Liu seinem engsten Schüler überlieferte und die eindeutig einen daoistischen Ursprung erkennen lassen. Auch diese Texte sind erhalten, und es ist bekannt, dass der konfuzianische Gelehrte Liu Yuan in der frühen Phase der *Liumen*-Bewegung die Rituale seiner Gemeinschaft persönlich leitete und *de facto* als daoistischer Priester fungierte. Die *Liumen*-Gemeinschaft verfügte zudem über ein Netzwerk religiöser Stützpunkte und karitativer Einrichtungen, und ihre Anhänger praktizierten regelmäßig meditative Übungen, die auf daoistischen Lehren der Selbstkultivierung, nämlich der „Inneren Alchemie“, basierten. Obwohl Liu Yuan stets bemüht war, das Primat des Konfuzianismus über seine Lehren zu betonen, ist die *Liumen*-Bewegung als Form des Laien-Daoismus zu betrachten, die weder in der monastischen *Quanzhen*-Lehre noch in der Tradition der professionellen Priester verwurzelt ist, sondern in der Kultur der Literati.²²

Abschließend ist festzustellen, dass der Daoismus, der in mancher Hinsicht eine „Religion des Buches“ darstellt, untrennbar mit der Gelehrtenkultur Chinas verbunden ist. Alle bedeutenden Daoisten, die als Autoren, Kommentatoren und Redakteure daoistischer Schriften oder Enzyklopädien tätig waren, besaßen eine umfassende Bildung und können zweifellos als Literati bezeichnet werden. Der bereits erwähnte Daoist DU GUANGTING diente am Hof des Tang-Kaisers Xizong 僖宗 (reg. 873-888), mit dem er zweimal vor Rebellionen nach Sichuan floh, und schließlich wurde er Tutor des dortigen Lokalherrschers Wang Jian 王建 (reg. 903-918), bevor er sich auf den Berg Qingcheng Shan zurückzog. DU GUANGTING schrieb einen bedeutenden Kommentar zum *Laozi*, umfangreiche historische und hagiographische Werke, ein Kompendium zu den heiligen Stätten des Daoismus sowie große Liturgie-Sammlungen und offizielle Dokumente. Seine Werke vermitteln nicht nur ein umfassendes Bild des Daoismus in der späten Tang-Zeit. Viele seiner Arbeiten, von denen bisher nur sehr wenige in westliche Sprachen übersetzt wurden, können auch zu einem besseren Verständnis der Geschichte beitragen und helfen, manche Fehler in den offiziellen Dynastiegeschichten zu korrigieren.²³ Andere daoistische Meister, wie z.B. der Ritualexperte Lu Xiuqing 陸修靜 (406-477), auf den u.a. die Grundordnung des daoistischen Kanons (*Daozang*) zurückgeht, oder der Patriarch Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536), der die Schriften der meditativen *Shangqing* 上清-Tradition klassifizierte, waren ebenfalls bedeutende Gelehrte.

Eine aktuelle und inspirierende Studie zu diesem Thema ist das Buch *Taoism – the Enduring Tradition* (2004) von dem amerikanischen Daoismus-Spezialisten RUSSELL KIRKLAND. KIRKLAND formuliert den Begriff „Literati Taoism“ und zeigt auf, dass die historisch bedeutenden Daoisten in der Regel zur Aristokratie (bis in die Tang-Zeit) oder zur späteren

²² Zur *Liumen*-Bewegung, die im Mittelpunkt meiner aktuellen Forschungsarbeit steht, s. VOLKER OLLES: *Der Berg des Lao Zi in der Provinz Sichuan und die 24 Diözesen der daoistischen Religion*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005, S. 140-163.

²³ Siehe FRANCISCUS VERELLEN: *Du Guangting (850-933): Taoïste de cour à la fin de la Chine médiévale*. Paris: Collège de France, 1989.

Gentry-Schicht gehörten. So überrascht es nicht, dass er viele Beispiele für Texte aus der daoistischen Religion anführen kann, die unter den Literati bekannt waren, und ebenso von daoistischen Priestern berichtet, die als Gelehrte angesehen waren oder als Beamte fungierten.²⁴ KIRKLAND betont, dass daoistische Modelle der Selbstkultivierung, die vor allem innerhalb der *Quanzhen*-Lehre bis in die Gegenwart überliefert worden sind, mit dem Weltbild der Literati harmonierten. Viele Literati studierten und praktizierten daher die Methoden der „Inneren Alchemie“ und entwickelten Formen der individuellen Praxis, die auch außerhalb des monastischen Lebens ihre Wirkung entfalten konnten.²⁵ Der oben vorgestellte Fall des Gelehrten Liu Yuan und seiner *Liumen*-Bewegung könnte KIRKLANDS Erläuterungen um ein weiteres Beispiel ergänzen und zeigt, dass die besondere Beziehung zwischen Chinas Gelehrtenwelt und der daoistischen Religion auch ihren Weg in die Moderne gefunden hat. Auf dieser Grundlage wird es auch möglich sein, den heutigen Daoismus als das zu betrachten, was er tatsächlich ist: eine lebendige und vielfältige Religion, die über ein ausgesprochen reiches kulturelles und literarisches Erbe verfügt.

²⁴ KIRKLAND 2004, S. 120-126.

²⁵ Ebd., S. 124 f.

The Ethics of Kong zi:

A priori responsibility or contract-stipulated duty?

Șerban Toader

What we are about to discuss along this article represents, as it will be seen, the core of this work and – of course – the most difficult step in my PhD thesis. The study in this text will ensure – as far as possible – the systematization of a content that is pre-eminently non-systematic, an attempt that isn't free of risk, however, nor without the peril of subjective limitation. On the other hand, the notion of ethics itself is disputed.

Two works – after a period dedicated to lecture, observation and to some pleasant bookish surprises – have gained the right to condition, from a methodic point of view, the following speech. The first book, Zygmunt Bauman's *Postmodern Ethics*; the second is a collection of essays and interviews, *Between us. Attempt to Contemplate the Other*, by Emmanuel Levinas, a unified work, but concerning some notions that the present study – a study about the ethics of Confucius – can't afford to ignore. The term of "reciprocity" has been identified as the most salient, a term that I have accepted as true and useful in day by day social experience. We would practice this with a clear conscience before reading the two authors.

In reality, Bauman and Levinas overturn this written or unwritten order, turning the concept of reciprocity into a practice worthy of censorship. For a better understanding, we could easily associate reciprocity to what we call expectations, or, more practically, calculations. At the ideal pole – according to the two authors – we have the attitude of a somewhat utopian responsibility, aprioristic and unconditioned by expectations of reciprocity. A totally individual, non-social, yet non-solipsist attitude – the source and context depend on the connection with the Other. Therefore, an attitude conditioned by the presence or reality of the Other, an augmentative inner state towards the ideal limit of integral bestowment, self sacrifice, a non-theological, non-juridical and non-custom state of grace.

Here is how Levinas illustrates such a state –

The real inter-human is found in a state of non-indifference of some toward others, a state of responsibility toward others, but before the reciprocity of this responsibility, registered as part of the impersonal laws, is placed above the pure altruism of the ethical state of responsibility: self as self; before any Contract that could precisely point out the moment of reciprocity where, the [inter-human] can, of course, carry on, or attenuate, even cancel altruism and lack of interest. The political order – post-ethical or pre-ethical – that inaugurates the "social contract", is not an insufficient condition nor a necessary end of ethics [Levinas, 2000, p. 108].

Also:

(...) being that we are inclined to think, the alterity of a man contrary to me is firstly – and if I may say so, it is in a “positive way” – the face of another man that obligates me, who, all of a sudden – without deliberation – is answered by the other one. *All of a sudden*, means he answers “gratuitous”, without thinking of reciprocity. The gratuity of *for another*, an answer to the responsibility that already slumbers within the greeting, in *hello* or *goodbye*. A language prior to the sentences that communicate information and narration [p. 168].

Therefore, an *a priori* responsibility – “prior to the deliberation and to which I’ve been exposed destined before I had a chance to choose my own way. (...) A responsibility that is prior to any logical deliberation that denounces the rational decision” [p. 172]. This type of responsibility is the one that interests us, (re-)exploring the *Analects*, considering – and stating from the very beginning if necessary – that we are not dealing with an inert pedagogic message, but with one adapted not only to the socio-cultural history or actuality, from whence it came, but also to spiritual posteriority – aboriginal or extra-Chinese. On the other hand we shall see at which level, a notion that we usually consider worthy of respect – *reciprocity* – should be marked and then reconsidered in the Confucian text, understanding that there is no analysis or perspective difficulty here, only one of translation.

Regarding the term of “contract” (and its derivation, *contractual*), the intellectual references will need to be multiplied. Undoubtedly, the discussion will refer to a contextual level, and not conceptual one (avoiding particularly the far too risky analogies). We will have the opportunity to discuss these matters another time.

Although I have mentioned him before Levinas (according to my own succession of reading), Bauman is the one to quote Levinas, providing, with this succession of ideas, a suitable frame for my present work. Bauman, however, goes further, making references to authors from various fields – philosophy, cultural anthropology, etc. not without any risk though, the risk of associating poorly compatible theoretical frames. Such a case will be discussed in one of the following subchapters, useful to this work because it contains notions considered vital – giving, sacrifice – notions that Bauman treats with special attention. For the moment, we will insist upon the following statements –

Although *before* relationships, unilaterality *not* reciprocity, a connection that cannot be inverted: these are the indispensable and defining characteristics of a moral position. “In connection with the Face, asymmetry can be declared; in the beginning it does not matter who the Other is compared to me, this is where the problem lies”. Levinas’s statement could be considered a definition of the Face: the Face is present only if my relationship with the Other is *pragmatically* asymmetrical, independent of past, present, anticipated or desired *reciprocity* by the Other. **Morals** is meeting the Other as a Face. The moral attitude produces an essentially *unequal* relationship; this inequality, inequity, this lack of reciprocity, this disregard for mutuality, this indifference toward the “balancing” of

winnings and rewards, in short, this organic, “unbalanced” and therefore irreversible character of the relationship “self/Other” is what turns the meeting into a moral event [Bauman, 2000, p. 55].

Bauman also writes –

“I am to the Other” means that I offer myself to the Other as a hostage. I take responsibility for the Other. But I take this responsibility not in the way that sign a contract, taking upon myself the obligations stipulated inside that contract. I am the one that takes responsibility and I can’t take it or refuse it, but, as a moral person, I take it as if I weren’t the one that is taking it, as if the responsibility were not to be assumed or refused, but as if it were there “already” and “forever”, as if it were mine without me ever having to assume it. My responsibility, which simultaneously constitutes the Other as a Face and me as a moral self, is *unconditional* [p.81].

As shown in the selected passages above, the distinction *responsibility* (unconditional) – *obligation* (contractual) is clearly expressed... undoubtedly there is no room to argument the Confucian inter-human relationship (particularly *reciprocity*) as belonging to a contractual type of obligation. It’s true that the title of this chapter proposes this hypostasis, but not as an alternative (either-or), nor as an extreme scenario, but as an explanatory reference point of the discussion. On the other hand, we regard (not *a priori*!) the discussion over the Confucian text – according to the first hypostasis – as fertile.

While our main concern is working with the text – a text with a status of canon – we shouldn’t lose sight of the reality that cultural Anthropology emphasizes: we will consider not only norm/normative (particularly what the *Analects* have to offer), but also “what is being done” – beyond the limits of written and perpetuated studies for the purpose of education and improvement. The second case entails some difficulties, one of them being the quasi-impossibility to verify, within the Chinese environment, the way that life is lived by the teachings of Confucius, the metamorphosis triggered by the creativity of each generation and individual and the elements that go – in particular cases – against the norm. However, I will use some ethnographic examples in my PhD thesis, and if they prove to be expressive enough, some journalistic reports will be useful in this respect.

***Ren*-kindness, or the “what” in Confucian thinking**

It is not much of an effort to prove the difficulty of finding a starting point for a discussion concerning Confucian ethics. Regarding the problem from an optimistic point of view, we might think that we can afford to choose from a variety of starting points. The following passage is equally encouraging and inhibiting:

The work unanimously attributed to Confucius, *Lun yu* (*Analects*), is written in the spirit of an anecdotes collection or a maxims, short parables or definitions and proverbs collection, with mostly intellectual and moral themes, destined to shape *junzi*, often structured as

dialogues between Master and disciples and arbitrarily arranged in 20 chapters, each of them being quite heteroclite, always hard to center upon a single thematic nucleus, marked by the tradition of the commentators with an indicative title, composed of the first two syllables of the chapter. Denotatively speaking, the title of the whole – *Lun yu* – “analects”, “discussions”, label the content of the book as predominantly made of dialogues and other aphoristic enunciations [Confucius, 1995, p.10].

The lines that I have quoted above offers a more than useful support: the original title of every chapter is followed by an explanation concerning the content. This way, explanatory titles like “On kindness’s virtue” (*Li Ren*, chapter 4), “On maintaining the rules” (*Zi Han*, chapter 9), “On virtues and their power in practice” (*Yan Hui*, chapter 12), etc. would provide the way toward the domain that we are trying to explore. This is a first entrance. On the other hand, we would prefer this entrance to take place through concept and not through enunciation. It is a question of specificity, if it isn’t forbidden to say so. Therefore, putting aside the concept that we are concentrating on in the present work – *rang* “concession”, let’s pay adequate attention to other basic concepts of the Confucian message. Hence, let us refer to Chapter chapter 4 (*Li Ren*) of the *Analects*...

Elaborated from the semantic radical (also with a phonetic role this time) *ren*, “man” and the numeral “two”, *ren* is the label of what we call “humanness”. Undoubtedly, finding a precise and final translation of the term would be an impossible task. Yet, the graphic-semantic structure does allow us us, at least for operative purposes, to be thankful for the translation and equalization of the concept.

The *Shuo wen jie zi* dictionary [Xu Shen, 1996, p. 161] identifies *ren* with *qin*, which means no more, no less that “to love, to hold dear”. In ancient Chinese, *qin* also means “parents”, “relatives”, “close friend” and “in person”. This semantic variety can easily become a source for speculation, but it is not the time now... The same dictionary explains *ren* as some sort of oriented love, toward *more than one direction*, a duplicated love, if we may say so, and this is where the character of the numeral “two” comes from. *Ren* also means “good and affectionate towards human beings”. After Confucius, Zhuang zi (Zhuang Zhou) sayd: “loving people and bringing them benefit is what we call *ren*” (chapter “The Sky and the Earth).

Finally, in contemporary language [XHC, p. 963], the term has kept its meaning of goodness, either regarded as an individual characteristic value, either “in action”, particularly in government. It is part of the many disyllabic words that – we could say – show the best part of an attitude toward others: “compassion” (*ren’ai*), “mercy, indulgence” (*renci*), “generosity” (*renhou*), “righteousness” (*renyi*), etc. We also find *renren-junzi* (lit. “kind *junzi*”) in contemporary speaking, a term that, regarded from the classical Chinese point of view, can only seem redundant today. If contemporary language allows such associations, for the sake of emphasis, we can consider kindness itself (*ren*) as one of the intrinsic values of the ideal model of *junzi*. *Renzheng* (lit. “kind government”) can be translated as “kind/humane political measures”. The dictionary example tells us, ideologically, to whom *we shouldn’t* apply humane political measures!

Trying to translate the term *ren* is but an introduction for what's to follow, and that is its contextual and particular understanding, with a didactic goal. Anne Cheng clearly states:

Although Confucius speaks of *ren* most of the time, he avoids clearly defining it, and so, doesn't limit its connotations. He offers successive variations as answers to the student's questions and as any good Master, the answers depend on the identity of the interlocutor in front of him. This is what he answers to the disciple Fan Chi: "*Ren* means loving the Other" (XII, 22). Readers often chose to understand from this phrase, especially with the coming of the missionaries, a possible approach to the Christian *agape*, overlooking the fact that far from referring to a divine source, the love that Confucius speaks of is entirely human, rooted in the affective-emotional dimension of man, in a connection of reciprocity [Cheng, 2001, p. 50].

Therefore, far from being a rigid concept, *ren* is transmitted, received and retransmitted according to the emotional (and intellectual) structure of the one who, generally speaking, is going through a deliberate process of improvement upon his own human condition, not in a solipsistic and abstract way, but indispensably connected with another. We dare to understand *ren* here, according to the quoted passage, as some sort of "missing piece" (or scarce yet recoverable), always different depending on the actor, nevertheless essential to the moral progress of everyone. Here is another opened path to the comparative approach to the message in the New Testament, a prudent approach without any theological claims, which can be discussed in a subsequent subchapter of our PhD thesis.

Getting back to the term of reciprocity, and at the same time, minding the warning from the debut (reciprocity as a condemnable condition, according to Levinas), it is wise to firstly accept and assume the equalization of the Chinese term as such, without overlooking the difficulties and risks of this equalization. Which Chinese term are we talking about? We quote from Anne Cheng –

To the disciples that ask him about a word that can lead someone's behavior throughout his entire lifetime, the Master answers: "*Shu* – reciprocity can; do not do to another that which you fear may happen to you (XV, 24)." The word *shu*, whose writing (*xin*, "heart", with the sign *ru* above, "the same as", an element that settles equality between two terms) establishes an analogical connection between hearts, with the meaning of respect for the Other as one has respect for oneself [p. 50].

Can this Confucian theory, in truth, a commandment (not an aphorism, model or parable) – a negative hypostasis, "do not do" instead of "do..." – stand for reciprocity through the Confucian spirit? From the very beginning we feel encouraged to interpret such a moral attitude as abstention, a retractile attitude instead of a harmful one. A moral choice with the Other's benefit as a benevolent version.

We shall continue the discussion about reciprocity, but first we must clarify the notion of "kindness", *ren*.

To illustrate such a gesture of self-placement into inferiority, material or spatial concession, Anne Cheng [p. 50] summons a passage from the chapter VI of the *Analects*.

As for the Virtue of Humanity, here is how it can be reached: if you want to appreciate yourself, place the Other above you; if you want what you deserve, let the Other have it first; to get closer, you must manage to get further. This is the path to achieving kindness (VI, 30).

The passage above helps us place the notion of *reciprocity* in front of an attitude conditioned by what we refer to as “expectation”, an essentially prospective gesture, aiming at a similarly blamable notion of calculus. On the contrary, the text extracted from chapter VI of the *Analects* illustrates a symbiotic social connection, where the Other is not *a priori* above me, nor abstract, but complementary – a socio-cosmic fact. One possible trap is the interpretation of the passage as a tactical network. The message suggests a ritual attitude: the eternal game of advancing prudently, followed by the obvious recoil. In a situation where I am not the only one that matters, neither is the Other, the Other will have priority. First him, then me. It seems like a useless game of gestures, a pedantry limited by a diurnal label. Thinking in, “middle path” terms however, we have a ritual order, lived and invested in action at the same time. In the me-Other relationship we are both important, but ritual order appoints the Other as most important. This is the equality found in the paradox of concession in favor of the Other!

Between the three states, the first is a concession from the own personality; the second state is one of material concession/restrain (and not only that): to obtain what I deserve, I give priority to the Other; finally, a ritual recoil, a concession in space is admitted before getting close to my target.

We may dare to say that *ren*, here, is a synonym to *rang*, a notion so dear to us. Statistically speaking, the term *rang* appears far less in the *Analects*. Here it is, now, translexically taking over a concept that we’re almost obsessed with, and which we have monitored.

Anne Cheng states that “from lack of something more fitting” she translates *ren* as “the quality of being human”, “sense of kindness, sense of humanness”. Anne Cheng says that

(...) [*ren*] is that which from the very beginning composes man as a moral being in the network of connections with another, whose complexity nevertheless harmonious is built according to the Universe itself. Therefore, the purpose of moral thinking would not be to discover a perfect way to install a convenient relationship between individuals; on the contrary, primordial is the moral bond, for this bond constitutes the nature of any human being.

We accept this “image of the universe” (“Cosmos” would be a more fortunate choice, for its connotation of *order*, but it was probably replaced for avoiding sino-elin analogies) as a perpetuated ritual symbol of the human behavior (*ren*, human, therefore moral). The content of the following passage could spare us from any additional discussions – “the purpose of moral thinking is not the discovery of a way to make the connection between the individuals

a convenient one”...in other words, a contractual connection is excluded. We will not stop here because we need to listen to the opinions of some other authors...

Is *ren* a state of mind or a moral ideal? A ritual-gesture aggregate or a purpose of the action? According to Anne Cheng,

Ren seems to be a value that Confucius holds very high, so high that he practically doesn't attribute it to anyone (especially to himself), maybe just to the mythical holy men of the Antiquity. At the same time he says that *ren* is very close to man: “Is the *ren*-ideal of Virtue so far away? It is sufficient for me to desire it and already I shall feel it close to me ! (VII, 29) [p. 49]

Further on –

Ren does not define an immobile ideal or a stereotype of perfection with which one should comply, but it rather comes from a necessity within, from an intrinsic order of things in

which one must reinstate. It's less about achieving an ideal, but rather about a pole to which one must aspire into infinity (...) [p. 49].

Therefore, process – experience and goal at the same time. When dialoguing with Zi Gong, Confucius replies: “How could I dare to think of myself as a Wiseman and say that I have achieved Kindness? I can only boast that while I'm full of zeal, I aspire toward this goal and that I tirelessly teach the others to do so. That is all (VII, 33)”. An individual, auto-enhancing experience, only not founded on individual criteria. Man (= the Other) as a permanent landmark, lively and sometimes surprising, generates within the one who is on a road to learning, the need to adjust oneself constantly according to living reality.

Resuming the discussion about etymology, we take a new look at the symbol of man (*ren*) and we see it as an unexpressed token of humanness. Not as a unit or individual, but simply as a humanness/kindness latency, or, in the words of Anne Cheng, “the human condition”. Connected and in motion, *ren*-human becomes *ren*-humanness – not an immobile state, or a new qualitative state of the unitary field, but a process, a development toward *ren*-humanness through *ren*-humanness. The biological status of man (*ren*) is no more than a fragment of the socio-cosmic reality, where the connection parent-child and child-parent is manifested with priority, which is supposed to be exemplary and hiatus-free in the development of the child and the aging of the parent. The parent's death does not mean the end of the child's pious mission, but merely a change of the communication tools (mourning for example). During the child's immature period, he needs of support, and so do the parent in their last years spent among the living. With the passing of time, the roles are inverted and the vitally supported become supporters.

Here is the first case of reciprocity – one that doesn't let us hesitate if we would stubbornly consider reciprocity either as an abstract pretext, or as a practical form of assuring a desirable social security. Undoubtedly, honesty and responsibility between reciprocal generations do not exclude the version of the practical attitude, a widespread attitude among those who, today,

legitimately possess the Confucian heritage. Having said this, we return (and invite to further discussion in the future) to asking ourselves, paraphrasing, if there is such a thing as “free kindness”! Anne Cheng answers – in accordance with an author greatly preoccupied by the non-gratuity of the gift (Mary Douglas) – mentioning a “solidarity between generations” [2001, p.52].

A solidarity between the unequal, we feel the need to emphasize this fact, a lack of equality that suggests an alternation in taking responsibility toward the other, starting with the personal child or parent and expanding the connection outside the familial circle:

As the proverb from the *Analects* suggests – “All those inhabiting the territory amidst the Four Seas, [of *junzi*] brothers shall be” (XII, 5) -, *ren* is a feeling of benevolence and trust at first, as it exists among the members of a family, which can spread slowly but surely in a time when the community is enlarged, to the scale of a country or even to the scale of a whole of humanity [Cheng, 2001, p. 52].

Far from having said everything, that would help us understand kindness/humanness in the Confucian spirit.

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Astrology in the Mongolian Wedding Ritual

Rodica Pop

The long and complex Mongolian wedding ritual is subject to the exogamic rule. The exogamic unit can be defined as essentially, though not exclusively, agnatic. In the case of patrilineal descent, as observed by Mongols, it is the son who perpetuates his father's lineage. As for daughters, they are bound to leave their clan and go faraway to live with their husbands' families and, in this sense, have patrilocal residence. With the progressive weakening of the clan, its traditional function as identifier of an individual's origin was lost. The old clan names lived on until the mid-20th century when most of the Mongols had forgotten their clan of origin. That situation made it difficult for the exogamic rule to be observed and astrology started to play a more and more important role based also on the increasing influence of Buddhism. In ancient times, the shamans resorted to various divination procedures, like the physical appearance of the girl, the moment of her birth, a dream etc., in order to determine the favourable day and hour for the wedding¹.

During the Middle Ages the Mongols were very concerned with predictions and omens. This preoccupation regarding the influence of the planets on human actions was present in their culture². After the introduction of Buddhism, the role of religion in the Mongolian society was extended to fields the shamans were rarely present in, and astrology gained unprecedented scope. The lamas intervened widely in various ordinary laic rituals, such as birth, wedding, funerals, and also in everyday life through astrology. On the other hand, the lamas did not participate in person in the various ceremonies of the wedding ritual unless he was a close relative of the family³.

Van Oost notes that a lama is never invited to preside over a wedding⁴. Under the circumstances, resorting to Buddhist astrology in the matrimonial process is a key factor and would therefore be appropriate to analyse its function within the Mongolian wedding ritual.

Astrological Compatibility

Buddhism follows and coordinates step by step all the stages of the wedding ritual by means of astrology. The lamas replaced the shamans and imposed their astrology which has a decisive role in the wedding ritual: the matchmaker, the spouse, the hour and the day of the

¹ Jagchid & Hyer, 83.

² « It is at new moon or full moon that they [the Mongols] start everything they want to do; also, they call the moon great emperor they bow and pray to », Plan Carpin (1965, 40) states.

³ Jagchid & Hyer, 89.

⁴ Van Oost 1932, 92. Here, the reason is not the role of the ecclesiastical institution in the laic rituals, but the fact that the presence of persons associated to infertility, single life, widowerhood is generally avoided in wedding rituals, it being considered to have a harmful influence on the fertility of the couple and the prosperity of the family. On the other hand, the participation of respectable men and women having a prolific descent is particularly looked for.

wedding, down to the colour of the horse which is going to bring the bride in the bridal procession to her husband.

All the moments of the ritual are governed by the lama-astrologer's decision after confronting the astrological elements of the future bride and groom with the Mongolian astrological books written according to the Tibetan-Buddhist tradition.

The manual of astrology edited by Mostaert⁵ is an example. Certain pages refer to the horoscopes of the future bride and groom.

We will present *infra* examples taken from similar works published in Mongolia.

Long before the wedding takes place, the parents of a boy who has reached the age of marriage and his close relatives start searching for a young girl which would seem a suitable daughter-in-law to them. After identifying such girl, they contact a lama-astrologer, offer him ceremoniously a ritual scarf, *hadag*,⁶ and ask him to find out if the age, birth date, the eight elements⁷, the astrological signs are compatible with those of their son.

Within some Mongolian ethnic groups, such as the Darigangas, the investigation requested by the boy's family is extended to the girl's parents as well.

This thorough and discreet investigation which the lama-astrologer is asked to conduct may be extended down to the origins of the girl's family (the lineage)⁸, which doesn't have to be a breach of the exogamic rule. We can see that, in this case, the lama took over the place of the shaman who is traditionnaly the connoisseur of his groups' genealogy.

The astrological investigation is pursued based on the information supplied by the boy's parents, which traditionally includes the year, the month, the day and the hour of birth of both the bride and the groom to be.

One of the elements taken into consideration when the decision is made and which also refers to the twelve-year cycle (represented by twelve animals in the lunar calendar) is the age gap between the future spouses. According to the Mongolian astrology requirements, the bride and groom to be should belong to the same generation i.e., the age difference between them should not exceed a twelve year cycle because they would be considered as belonging to two different generations.

If the age difference is of less than 12 years, they are considered as being « of the same generation » *üje sacuutan/negen üjeijnhen* or « of close generation » *ojr üjeten*. But if the gap is over 13 years Mongols would say that « the generations broke up » *üje multarč bajna*: litt. « the joints are dislocating ») and in this case the wedding is not advisable⁹.

Besides belonging to the same generation, the years of birth of the boy and the girl have to be compatible within the cycle of twelve years¹⁰. The lama-astrologer also surveys the combination of the nine *menge*, « birth mark, mole, beauty spot ». It is a matter of nine marks

⁵ Antoine Mostaert, *Manual of Mongolian astrology and divination*, Harvard University Press, 1969.

⁶ Votive scarf in Tibetan tradition. This ceremony scarf is presented folded up in three lengthwise, with its open side towards the person it is presented to.

⁷ *Suudal*, litt « sit », designates also the series of eight elements considered in astrology: the fire, the earth, the iron, the sky, the water, the mountain, the tree, the wind.

⁸ Actually the boy's family is searching the origin of the girl's family, her *jas ovog*, i.e. the patrilineal clan.

⁹ Cf. Gongor 1976, 202.

¹⁰ The compatible years are called *iveel žil*.

used in the establishment of a horoscope. Each group from 1 to 9 is associated to a colour (which may be repeated). So, for instance 1 is white, 2 is black, 3 is blue, 4 is green, 5 is yellow, 6 is white, 7 is red, 8 is white, 9 is red.

The expression *menge n' golloh* designates the recurrence of the same *menge* every nine years, which is assumed to be the beginning of an ill-fated period.

If the lama-astrologer's answer on the astrological compatibility of a young couple to be is unfavourable, the wedding will not take place and his work ends here. However, if the parents absolutely want this wedding, it is possible to bend the verdict, by making a payment to the astrologer, or to ward off ill fortune consequences of such a union by asking that prayers be offered¹¹. But if the horoscope and the astrological signs do match, the wedding is declared possible and can be accomplished (*bolž bütne*).

As soon as this is stated, the interventions of the lama-astrologer will continuously be needed in order to set the right time for each stage of the wedding ritual. It will be his task to find, with the help of astrology books the appropriate day for the wedding which should coincide with the appropriate day to arrange the girl's hair with the particular headdress and ornaments. Also, the lama will indicate the appropriate day to cut the fabric for the girl's elaborate dress, the appropriate colour of the fabric, the right time to attach the hair ornaments and wear the jewels of a married woman, all while advising on the auspicious time of giving the girl and taking her (by the parents-in-law): certain days have to be avoided because they could be inauspicious to the future couple.

Also, when the boy takes the girl to bring her at his place, he can do so but only along the way indicated by the astrologer. Thus, the groom has to follow the ritual called *zöv züg garah* « to go in the right direction »¹² according to the indications of the astrologer.

So minute is the investigation of the lama – astrologer that it even points out the auspicious hours for such or such ritual.

This is the case of the first fire lighting in the fireplace of the new yurt, one of the most important moments of the wedding ritual as the symbol of perpetuation of the lineage. The same goes for pronouncing the « words for blocking the felt door », a verse dialogue between girl's party and the boy's party, which occurs before the bride crosses the threshold of the yurt of her parents-in-law to bow down in front of their fire. This verbal jousting between the two parties continues until the master of ceremony breaks the dialogue in verse and announces that « the hour of the snake has passed, and this is the hour of the horse »¹³. It is indeed the hour considered as propitious for the bride to enter for the first time in the yurt of her parents-in-law. Thus the verbal jousting should end immediately no matter when it started because nobody would like to let slip the lucky hour.

But the work of the astrologer doesn't stop at investigating the bride and groom compatibility and fixing the lucky hours, days and months which should match as important

¹¹ Fr. Aubin 1975, 532, note 15.

¹² This ritual is not confined to wedding only, it is performed particularly on the first day of the new lunar year, *Cagaan sar* when the astrologer shows the right direction to be taken at the first exit from the yurt, in order to have an auspicious year.

¹³ *Mogoj cag n' öngöröv, morin cag n' bolloo* (Jadamsüren 1968, 76). The hour of the snake corresponds to 9 :40-11 :40 and is followed by the hour of the horse, from 11 :40 to 13 :40 (Ar'yasüren & Nyambuu 1992, 678)

moments of the wedding. He also has to investigate the astrological compatibility of other important characters involved in the ritual, such as the matchmakers (their birth dates should be « compatible » *iveel* with that of the groom they represent before the bride's parents), the *bergen*¹⁴ of both parties, the groom's accompanying persons on his way to taking the bride away.

Even the colour and the age of the horses which the grooms party provides to the bride's family as part of the « matrimonial compensation » *sūj beleg* or those which the bride will ride in order to go to the family-in-law, are specifically stated by the astrologer.

Nothing, not even the smallest detail should be neglected or left to chance and all along the ritual, the ceremonies chain up accurately, as Mongols follow to the letter the indications and recommendations of the lama-astrologer.

Even if nowadays – and especially in town – the long and complex wedding ritual was simplified, we have to note that the investigation of the astrological compatibility of the future spouses remains a major concern, without exception.

Astrological Constraints Relating to Wedding according to Mongolian Astrology Textbooks

The books of astrology provide detailed information concerning various aspects of the wedding. We shall refer to a first illustration of the principles of this astrological tradition in a recent work *Mongol zurhaj bujuu hūn sudlal* [Mongolian Astrology or the human study], compiled by D. Cerendežid, and published in Ulan-Bator in 1999. This manual of astrology intended for the general public was sold out in record time and is at present circulated in photocopies from one person to another. This testifies to the strong demand for this type of publications nowadays and to the attention the Mongols give in their everyday life to the constraints determined by traditional astrology.

Compatible years

The 12 years of the duodecimal cycle, each represented by an animal, are divided in four groups of three years considered as compatible between them; within each group the order of the years (animals) may vary. This compatibility does not only concern the birth year of the future spouses, but it may also consider the professional life, the economic relations, when to establish associations, collaborations etc. These four groups of compatibles years are as follows:

1. rat, dragon, monkey
2. ox, snake, hen
3. tiger, horse, dog
4. hare, sheep, boar

¹⁴ Older women who assist at a wedding to settle the couple in and to admonish them; wife of the elder son.

Incompatible years

The twelve years are otherwise divided in three groups of four years each, considered as incompatible between them; within each group the order of the years (animals) can vary. The three groups of incompatible years are as follows:

1. rat, hare, horse, hen
2. ox, dragon, sheep, dog
3. tiger, snake, monkey, boar

The incompatibility holds particularly for relations by marriage, and does not affect strictly professional, associative or other collaborative relationships.

Male years, female years

When the lamas and the astrologers¹⁵ are searching in order to find out if the years of birth of the boy and of the girl are compatible, they also take the male and female character of the year into consideration. In this sense, Mongolian astrology classifies the twelve years into six male years and six female years.

The *male years* are: rat, tiger, dragon, horse, monkey, dog
The *female years* are: ox, hare, snake, sheep, hen, boar

It is advisable for persons born in a male year to marry persons born in a male year too and vice versa. However, if a person born in a male year marries a person born in a female year, the union may be successful in the particular case where the girl is born in a female year and the boy in a male year. On the contrary, a girl born in a male year may not¹⁶ marry a boy born in a female year.

If the boy and the girl are born in the same year of the cycle, viz. both are born either in the same male year or the same female year, marriage is not recommended, because their lives would be a continuous fight for the dominant position therein. There is only one exception viz. for those who are both born in the year of the boar, a female year. In this case alone, marriage is highly auspicious.

This is how the Mongolian book of astrology defines precisely the incompatibilities of marriage between individuals born in the same year of the duodecimal cycle of the lunar calendar:

1. If both are born in the year of the rat, they will be poor, even if they have many sons;
2. If both are born in the year of the ox, their children will have health problems at birth or afterwards;

¹⁵ Nowadays lay people also practise astrology with the help of manuals (textbooks).

¹⁶ *Ceerleh*, « to observe a ban »; the terms « taboo, ban » correspond to the Mongolian concept conveyed by *ceer*.

3. If both are born in the year of the tiger, they will have an unstable place of residence, each of them on one's own;
4. If both are born in the year of the hare, their children's lives will be at risk;
5. If both are born in the year of the dragon, theirs will be a difficult lifetime of poverty and suffering;
6. If both are born in the year of the snake, the marriage will be un auspicious at first and only improve eventually;
7. If both are born in the year of the horse, they will experience much suffering in marriage and will have very few children;
8. If both are born in the year of the sheep, they will be happy at the beginning of their marriage, but unhappy at the end;
9. If both are born in the year of the monkey, their children, daughters or sons will have serious behavioural problems: they will be either alcohol-addicts or thieves;
10. If both are born in the year of the hen, they will have problem sons and they will be poor;
11. If both are born in the year of the dog, their children will have dangerous lives and there will be conflicts between parents;
12. If both are born in the year of the boar, there is a good chance for their marriage to be successful, to have many sons and be a wealthy family;

Out of these twelve cases of marriage considered between young people born in the same year, only one case is seen by astrology as auspicious, all the others being clearly inauspicious, or even disastrous, as the consequences extend not only to the spouses, but also to their descendants.

Combination of years of birth forbidding marriage

Year of birth		Consequences
Men	Women	
Rat	Snake	The marriage will be unhappy because of the bad nature of the children and grandchildren, difficult to be educated and almost impossible to cure if they fall ill.
Ox	Dragon	The couple will find itself ruined, without a house, at the end of their lifetime
Tiger	Snake	Although they have sons, they will be on bad terms, enemies, and will have a serious accident
Snake	Tiger	Endless quarrels and material losses
Sheep	Snake	Disagreements - spiritual, physical and professional
Dog	Sheep	The spouses will treat each other as enemies, being at risk to die or split up
Boar	Rat	Endless insults, jealousy and conflicts
Snake	Rat	They will meet various obstacles in their work
Hare	Boar Ox Rat	Even if they have long lives, many sons and everything seems to go well, they will meet with all sorts of difficulties in their actions
Dragon	Rat Boar	Even if the parents will have long lives, their children will have an unhappy destiny

Incompatible years from a sexual point of view

rat – hare
 ox – tiger
 dragon – snake

sheep - dog
 horse - monkey
 monkey – sheep

Inauspicious age for the marriage of the girl

Year of birth of the girl	Inauspicious age for wedding
Rat	17, 18, 26, 27
Ox	14, 16, 18
Tiger	17, 22, 26, 30, 36
Hare	16, 26, 30
Dragon	17, 19, 22, 28
Snake	20, 24, 28
Horse	15, 17, 22, 29
Sheep	14, 16, 22, 26, 36
Monkey	14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 25
Hen	14, 17, 22
Dog	17, 20, 21
Boar	17, 23, 32

Rules to be observed when the girl goes to her parents-in-law and bows down to their fire

When conducting the wedding ritual, one should also observe the compatibility between the years of birth of the bride and the man designated to accompany her for the ritual of prostration to the father-in-law's fire.

Year of birth of the bride	Year of birth of the person in charge of the bride's ritual of prostration
Rat	Dragon
Ox	Snake
Tiger	Horse
Hare	Sheep
Dragon	Monkey
Snake	Hen
Horse	Dog
Sheep	Boar
Monkey	Rat
Hen	Ox
Dog	Tiger
Boar	Hare

Another rule to observe is the compatibility of the bride's year of birth with the coat of the horse she will ride during her ceremonial procession to her parents-in-law, and with the auspicious hour for her departure.

We should note that the colour of some horses do not match the names of coats used by Mongols.

Year of the bride	Coulor of the bride's horse	hour ¹⁷ of departure
Rat	white-blue (<i>höh-cagaan</i>)	Dragon-snake
Ox	black-red (<i>ulaan-har</i>)	Snake-horse
Tiger	black	Dragon-sheep
Hare	black	Dragon-monkey
Dragon	black-red (<i>ulaan-har</i>)	Dragon-serpent
Snake	green-black (<i>har-nogoon</i>)	Hare-monkey
Horse	green-black (<i>har-nogoon</i>)	Hare-snake
Sheep	red	Snake-monkey
Monkey	yellow	Dragon-sheep
Hen	yellow	Dragon-sheep
Dog	red	Snake-horse
Boar	white-blue (<i>höh-cagaan</i>)	Snake-hen

Forbidden directions for the groom to take when bringing his future bride home

It is compulsory to observe the way recommended by the astrologer, viz to « start out in the right direction » *zöv züg garah* and follow the movement of the sun¹⁸ in order to find one's road and « arrive correctly [at destination] » *zöv ireh*. Inauspicious directions vary with the season and players in the wedding process:

¹⁷ An example of matching the hours named by the animals of the Mongolian calendar with the 24 hours of a day in our modern calendar is given by Č. Ar'jaasüren et H. Njambuu in their *Dictionary of Mongolian customs* (1992, 678). The authors rely on the sunrise hour in the third month of winter. So, we have the hour of the dragon = 7:40 – 9:40; the hour of the snake = 9:40 – 11:40; the hour of the horse = 11:40 – 13:40; the hour of the sheep = 13:40 – 15:40; the hour of the monkey = 15:40 – 17:40; the hour of the hen = 17:40 – 19:40; the hour of the snake = 19:40 – 21:40; the hour of the boar = 21:40 – 23:40; the hour of the rat = 23:40 – 1:40; the hour of the ox = 1:40 – 3:40; the hour of the tiger = 3:40 – 5:40; the hour of the hare = 5:40 – 7:40.

¹⁸ This means in the South-East-West direction, or clockwise. The right direction is also the one used to walk round the oboos (*ovoo*, cairn erected from stones as a dwelling for local deities) or temples.

Season	Spring	Autumn	Summer	Winter
Incompatible for in-laws	West-East	East-West	South	North
Incompatible for the couple	East	West	North	South

Auspicious days for cutting the deel¹⁹

There are days assumed to be auspicious for cutting and sewing the *deel*, the dress of a married woman, for the bride.

The most auspicious days of the week are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The other days are considered as inauspicious, and as such forbidden for starting to make the bride's dress.

Auspicious days for adorning with the headdress and dress up the bride

This day is usually the same day as the great wedding party which is inevitably a favourable day set in advance by the astrologer.

Generally speaking, it is of good omen to adorn a new garment on Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. Mondays are not particularly favourable; as for Sundays, Tuesdays and Saturdays, they are prohibited, *ceerlene*.

The day of the « monkey », as well as the eighth day of the lunar calendar are forbidden because they are unlucky.

The auspicious days for a married woman to put on the jewels for the first time are: Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Auspicious days for mounting a new yurt

The days of the lunar month favourable for erecting the new yurt are as follows: 3, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, and 25.

Ill-advisable days are: 10, 20, 22, 30. Adding to them are Sundays which shall be avoided, as a rule.

Auspicious days for lighting the fire in the new fireplace

The favourable days for lighting the new fireplace are Sundays, Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are not advisable for such action.

The lunar calendar days 2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 23 and 27 are auspicious.

During the wedding ritual, consideration is also given to the compatibility of the bride's year of birth with that of the person who puts up the tripod in the fireplace and also of the person who lights the fire in the new yurt.

¹⁹ Mongolian traditional costume.

Another Mongolian source²⁰ elaborates on why the coincidence of certain hours, days and years is not propitious to certain accomplishments, including elements of the wedding ritual. According to this book, one should avoid mounting a new yurt or starting the construction of a new house when the year, the day and the hour of the horse are concurrent because all the work is doomed to failure. The reason, according to the astrological criterion observed by the Mongols, is that the horse has no gall-bladder²¹.

While astrology has made a strong come back among certain Mongolian communities – in wedding, examination, haircut, establishment of an association, etc. – the strict observance of the astrological prescriptions make wedding highly difficult, which is a paradox outlined by such Mongols today. There are some who even say that, if all the requirements of the Mongolian astrology were to be met, it is actually impossible to marry.

So the lama-astrologists would have to be called once again, only this time to help people out with the countless prohibitions which the Buddhist astrological tradition has imposed and take the necessary steps in order that nothing would harm a future couple.

In spite of the fact that the successive ceremonies as part of the long and complex wedding ritual take place in the yurts of the bride's and the groom's parents, not in a Buddhist temple, the Mongolian wedding is entirely run by the lamas by means of astrology. Every step of the ritual depends on the astrologer's decisions. The above examples prove the omnipresence of the Buddhist religious institution in the Mongolian wedding ritual which, nevertheless, is basically secular.

²⁰ C. Nacagdorž, *Hünij törsön žil sar ödör cagijn töörög oršvoj* [Book of destiny, according to the hour, day, month and year of birth of the person]. Ulan-Bator, 1992.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, 44.

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Rituals in Ōkinawa and the Visit of Gods

Atsushi Mashimo

Introduction

Among all the prefectures in Japan, Ōkinawa is the area where oral tradition and belief in gods have been most fully preserved. The customs of the individual islands in Ōkinawa prefecture have generally merged into one another, giving birth to an individual culture. The same tendency of assimilation can be noticed throughout Japan. This leads me to believe that Ōkinawa's culture is an integral part of Japan's. However, unlike mainland Japan – north of Kyūshū and south of Tōhoku in the Honshū Island – Ōkinawa has its own history as an independent state. From a cultural point of view, it is a particularly interesting region within the Japanese Archipelago.

1. Life in Ōkinawa and the Belief in Gods

Ōkinawa stretches for a distance of approximately 3,000 kilometers from north to south, lying south-west of the Japanese Archipelago. The islands lie scattered in a total sea area of 1,000 kilometers from east to west, and 400 kilometers from north to south. Ōkinawa Prefecture lies at a longitude ranging between 122.5° and 129°, and at a latitude extending between 24° and 27°. The archipelago consists of about 160 islands, 46 of which are inhabited. Ōkinawa, the main island of the archipelago, has a surface of 1,200 km² and is inhabited by about 11,500,000 people, but there are also little islands where only a few people live.

Unlike the temperate climate in the islands lying north of Kyūshū, Ōkinawa has an oceanic subtropical climate. In summer, temperatures rise up to 30°C, while in winter the lowest temperatures range between 6°C and 15°C. The area is blessed with a pleasant climate.

After World War II, Ōkinawa Prefecture was under American occupation for twenty seven years, but in 1972 it was returned to Japan. Since then, due to its mild climate and to the gorgeous beauty of the sea, it has become a tourist sight, attracting people from all over Japan, as well as from Korea, Taiwan, etc.

Ōkinawa Prefecture faces Taiwan in the south and China in the west, across the East and South China Seas. Starting from the first century, it developed economic relations, through shell trade exchanges, with Taiwan and China, as well as with mainland Japan lying north of Kyūshū, with South Korea, etc. Being beautiful and precious, the bracelets made of shells fished in the surrounding seas attracted the attention of influential people. Between the 10th and the 13th centuries, in the main islands there were erected stonewalled buildings resembling castle forts, and after the 13th century, such buildings have been constructed throughout the prefecture. Regional petty rulers gradually gained ascendancy and became powerful rulers. By the 14th century Ōkinawa Prefecture was divided among three kingdoms: the Northern State, the Central State and the Southern State. They initiated relations with China, and the fact that they competed with each other is mentioned in the History of China. In the first half of the 15th century, the lord of the castle in the Central State lost his power, and the lord who took it over also destroyed the other two states, eventually unifying them into one centralized state – Ryūkyū Kingdom.

Ryūkyū Kingdom also ruled over the neighboring islands and the Amami Archipelago, as well as over the two distant archipelagos, Miyako and Yaeyama, thus extending its territory. Later, aside from trade exchanges with China, Korea and Japan, the kingdom also initiated relations with other East Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, etc. By gathering precious things, it became prosperous among the East Asian countries. Ryūkyū Kingdom, as a territory dependent upon China, kept up relations by sending missions to the Court of the Chinese Emperor and by training its governmental officials in China. On the other hand, from mainland Japan there came Buddhist priests and adepts of this religion and their religious practices were initiated.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Portugal and Spain invaded countries in the South-East Asia, and around the middle of the century, Chinese merchants also advanced towards this part. In the latter half of the 16th century, Japanese merchants considered Ryūkyū Kingdom to be of little importance, and they moved towards other countries in South-East Asia, trade with Ryūkyū Kingdom running extremely low.

Under such circumstances, at the beginning of the 17th century, Ryūkyū Kingdom was invaded and defeated by the army of the political leaders of Satsuma domain (today's Kagoshima Prefecture), south of Kyūshū, thus being subdued both to China's Emperor and to Japan's Shōgun. It is this way that we can explain not only the influence of Chinese culture, but also that of the Japanese aristocracy (e.g., *waka* – 31 syllable poems, the traditional *Nō* theatre, *sadō* – the tea ceremony, etc.).

In the latter half of the 19th century, the military power of the samurai collapsed and a new government was set up, through the reversion of political power to the emperor¹. The affiliation of Ōkinawa to Japan became imminent and it came to be called Ōkinawa Prefecture. It was nevertheless under the domination of the American army during World War II and in the ensuing years, until 1972.

Since ancient times, people in Ōkinawa have lived a hard life, trying to earn their living by fishing coral reefs in shallow waters, as well as by cultivating the scarce agricultural plots. Except for some large islands, such as Ōkinawa, Iriomote, Ishigaki, where high mountains can be found, there are no long rivers in the relief of the smaller islands. In such islands, people relied on the rain and on the water of the springs found in the hollow grounds on the steep slopes of the seacoast or the hills. The inhabitants of these islands lacked the daily allotment of water. As paddy fields were also dependent on the rain, when it started raining, people even resorted to a peculiar way of storing water: they took cattle out into the paddy fields and then irrigated their crops with the water in the puddles made in the hoofs' traces. Because in summer it would seldom rain, the water necessary to agriculture was insufficient, and the harvest was often damaged.

Due to low atmospheric pressure, typhoons hit Ōkinawa directly tens of times every year, from summer till autumn. The strong winds play havoc, damaging buildings. When the low atmospheric pressure brings about tremendous downpours that flood the whole island, the harvest withers because of the marine salt, causing still more severe damage. When typhoons do not hit the archipelago directly, they bring about heavy rains, which are welcome and salutary

¹ Meiji Restoration, 1868.

after the troubles brought about by the lack of water during the summer time. Thus we can say that nature brings both blessedness and calamities. The inhabitants in this archipelago, who have lived a hard life, influenced by the overwhelming forces of nature, fervently pray to the Gods of Nature for a better life.

As compared to the inhabitants on the continent, the life of those living in islands surrounded by seas is almost always exposed to danger, due to the overwhelming power of nature. Even fishing is under the sign of the divine will. People have thus devotedly kept their beliefs in gods.

Miyako and Yaeyama islands are south of Ōkinawa Island, at a distance of 300 kilometers, and between them there is no other island. The danger of sailing in boats precluded both frequent economic exchanges and also verbal communication. In the latter half of the 14th century, the ruling clan in Miyako Island sent messengers to Chūzan State in Ōkinawa, but it was impossible for them to understand one another. The messengers stayed in Ōkinawa for three years in order to learn the language spoken there and finally communication became possible. Language barriers have lasted until nowadays, and there are still misunderstandings between local people even in everyday conversation. The necessity of a common language has become obvious, at least on a certain level. The most striking example is that offered by Yaeyama Archipelago. Though the distance between Taketomi Island and Ishigaki Island, belonging to Yaeyama Archipelago, is covered by a fast ship in less than ten minutes nowadays, the details of a normal conversation are unintelligible. For instance, a friend of mine born in Taketomi had to learn the language spoken in Ishigaki Island when he attended high school there, and then he had to learn the language spoken in Ōkinawa Island during his university years. When he did graduate study in mainland Japan, he had to again learn the language spoken here.

Such differences are especially manifest in the linguistic field, but there are other cultural domains in which they are also obvious, and therefore I can state there are many differences between Ōkinawa Island and Miyako or Yaeyama islands.

2. The Concept of “God” and of “the *Otherworld*” in Ōkinawa

In primitive Japanese belief, gods were divided in two main categories: those who were deified due to their force of bringing about natural phenomena on the one hand, and ancestors' souls who live somewhere far away, beyond our world, on the other. The gods in the first group are associated with rain, thunder, wind, etc. and each of these natural phenomena have its own god (e.g., The God of the Rain, the God of the Thunder, the God of the Wind, etc.) in whom people believed and whom they worshiped fervently. The gods in the second category are also worshiped as they are considered to have already ascended to the rank of gods.

The belief in the deities in Ōkinawa is generally regarded in the same way. According to Yasuo Watanabe, gods fall into six groups:

- All the gods who descend from Heaven belong to the first group: Heavenly Gods, the God of the Sea who comes from beyond the sea, the deified Spirit of the Sun, the God of the Rain, the God of Forest, the God of the Mountain, the God of the Water, etc., namely all Gods of Nature.
- Watanabe includes, in the second category, all the gods who protect people and live in

their vicinity, namely: the God of the Hearth, the God of the Toilet, the God of the House, the God of the Paddy field, the God of the Well, etc.

- The gods in the third category hold a special place in people's lives, being the guardians of jobs: the God of Bellows (the deified source of the magic power of blacksmiths), the God of Carpenters, the God of Boatmen, the God of *Noro* (who protects the priestesses called *Noro*), etc.

- The fourth category includes ancestors. It is said that after the thirty-third anniversary of a death, the spirit of the dead becomes god, losing its individuality. Ancestors who were founders of village communities or who were promoters of culture do not lose their individuality, being venerated in sacred places called *Utaki*.

- Persons considered saints, deified as gods, belong to the fifth group. Here it is included "the spirit" of the sister who protects her brother(s), as well as the shaman-woman, endowed with particular spirituality. Both are called *seji* and it is said that they abide in the mind of the respective person.

- Malevolent spirits and demons belong to the sixth group, but even these sometimes take the shape of venerated gods.

This is the classification of the Ōkinawan gods made by Watanabe, but I am going to speak only about the gods in the first four groups, omitting the sacred persons who are worshiped as gods, as well as the malevolent spirits and the demons included in the sixth category.

According to Joseph Kleiner, these deities can be classified in two groups: on the one hand, the gods who descend to earth throughout the year, at appointed moments, or the gods who come and go back to their world; and the gods who are always present among people, on the other.

Among those who are always present among people we can include: the God of the Hearth / Stove in the second group, and various guardian gods of the jobs in the third group. They are worshiped at home or within communities, in sacred places such as the hearth or the Shintō altar, as their influence in the village life is considered to be uninterrupted. Since the gods in the first group and in the fourth group stay among the people for a while or descend to sacred places nearby, they are usually worshiped in sacred places, called *Utaki*. Kleiner holds it that ancestors' souls worshiped as gods abide in *Utaki*, and they are always present among people, but there are places where they are not thought of in this way. For instance, in Taketomi Island (Yaeyama Archipelago), the ancestors' souls venerated as gods in *Utaki* are considered to come to our world and then go back to theirs, a belief certified by footsteps on the rocks upon their returning to the Otherworld. Not even priests can explain the situation clearly: do such gods permanently abide on earth, or do they come down to earth and then go back to their realm?

I would like to mention another belief related to the sacred place called *Utaki*, namely the concept of "great mediation". It is believed that gods abiding in distant realms, such as the God of the Heaven or the God of the Sea, are worshiped in such sacred places – the main object of belief of the inhabitants in Ōkinawa.

Generally speaking, *Utaki* ("sacred grove") is a place covered with shrubs and bushes, in a village or in its neighborhood, on the coast of the sea or in the mountains, far from human settlements. It is a sacred place where gods are worshiped. An older form of *Utaki* is represented by a recess in a big rock or a hollow tree, where an incense burner is set. Such a place is not created by man's skill. Rocks and trees are said to be distinctive marks of gods' abodes on earth. (In mainland Japan they are called *Yorishiro*.)

According to primitive folk belief, there is a god abiding in Miwa Mountain (Nara Prefecture), who is worshiped in the main Shintō shrine at the foot of the mountain. In the 4th and the 5th centuries there were no buildings of worship dedicated to gods. Some time after this period, altars called *Haiden* were established, where gods were worshiped and celebrated. As people believed that a god abode in Miwa, shrines were built there in order to host the worship rituals.

The sacred places in Ōkinawa are said to preserve the shape of the ancient sacred places in mainland Japan. Nowadays it is even believed that these were influenced by the belief in the God of the Mountain in mediaeval Japan. *Utaki* came to be influenced by the ideal State Shintō around seventy years ago when, in many places in Ōkinawa, were erected shrines and *torii* (Shintō shrine archway-gate) resembling those in mainland Japan.

“The Otherworld” imagined by the inhabitants of Ōkinawa consists of the vertical heavenly world called *Obotsu Kagura* by the Ryūkyū Kingdom, and the heavenly horizontal world, called *Niraikanai*.

The vertical heavenly world is thought to be the place of the founder god who created the island and initiated agriculture. In the myths referring to the creation of Ōkinawa, it is said that the founder god descended from Heaven, and the rich harvests were caught in the hems of the sacred kimonos worn by the priests at the ritual of prayers for abundant crops, addressed to gods.

On the other hand, *Niraikanai* is said to be the realm situated beyond the sea, being located in the east, that is, in the place where the sun rises. For instance, in Kudakajima (island), which played a very important part in the rituals practiced at the court of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, *Niraikanai* is considered to lie beyond the Eastern Sea. The truth is that the belief regarding the location of this realm differs from island to island, but we have no reason to state that it lies in the eastern part. In many cases, this world is supposed to be situated somewhere in the deep sea, which means it is identified with the World Beyond, called *Ryūgū* – the Sea Dragon’s Palace. This realm is considered to be the fountainhead of abundant harvests.

It is said that in days of yore grains used to drop in Kudakajima from *Niraikanai*. Then they were stored in a bowl. People would plant the grains, and that is how agriculture started. In Miyako Island there is the belief that on the occasion of the harvest prayers, the God’s boat will appear, loaded with rich crops that are unloaded on the quay of the harbor. People say that among the shaman priestesses who practice the rituals in honor of gods, there are some who can see and hear everything. In Taketomi Island (Yaeyama Archipelago), there is a ritual of invitation addressed to the God from *Niraikanai* to descend among people. They chant: “The God’s boat has come and it is full of rich crops”. The ritual is performed on the shore, in front of the rock called *Niranseki*, to which the boat is supposed to be tied. The rituals and folktales show that *Niraikanai* is the source of rich harvests, but the gods coming from *Niraikanai* cannot be seen.

However, *Niraikanai* has more than wealth and a shiny appearance. In April, according to the lunar-solar calendar (all the rituals in Ōkinawa are performed according to the old calendar), a ritual called *abushibarē* takes place on the shore, on the occasion of which noxious insects, such as locusts, and harmful animals to harvests, such as mice, are set afloat, driven away to a distant place lying beyond the sea – *Niraikanai*. This place is also thought to be the realm of the souls of the dead. In the central part of Ōkinawa Island, there is a ritual at funerals in which

people send away the souls of the dead in boats.

Niraikanai has a twofold significance.

In Ōkinawa Prefecture it is believed that *Ryūgū* – the Sea Dragon's Palace – is a realm resembling *Niraikanai* or even overlapping with it. Unlike *Niraikanai*, *Ryūgū* does not lie beyond the sea, but at the bottom of the sea. It is imagined as an extremely impressive place.

The word *Ryūgū* was introduced to mainland Japan from China, through Buddhist scripts, at the beginning of the 7th century. From the collection of tales entitled *Konjaku Monogatari*² which came out at the end of the 12th century, we infer that the aristocracy in that period believed it to be a source of wealth, but in mainland Japan, *Ryūgū* was not found only at the bottom of the sea, but also in the springs of the mountains.

In the legend of *Urashima Tarō*, circulating in the 8th century folk literature, famous all over Japan, a man rescues a turtle, which turns into a beautiful girl. The two marry and go to *Hōrai-san* – the Isle of Eternal Youth, a realm located beyond the Eastern Sea, according to the Chinese Taoist belief in supernatural forces. The three years the main character spends in *Hōrai-san* equals three hundred years spent in our world. Nevertheless, according to a 15th century legend, the realm visited by *Urashima Tarō* was nothing else but *Ryūgū* – the Sea Dragon's Palace. The time he spent there was also different from the time in the real world, being influenced by the Taoist concept of the supernatural.

As we can see, the Sea God's Palace in mainland Japan (in the 8th century it was called *Watatsumi no Miya*) came to be known as the Sea Dragon's Palace in the 15th century, being thought of as the fountainhead of wealth and of vital force, as well.

In my opinion, the concept of the Otherworld in Ōkinawa is also connected to that of the Palace of the Dragon King.

In the 18th century collection of folktales entitled *Irōsetsuden*, there is a tale about an old woman called Girai-baba, who suddenly disappeared into the realm of *Ryūgū* (which is usually recorded as *Niraikanai* in the documents of the time). Then she was brought back to this world by the waves of the sea. We also learn from this story that the time in the world of people differs from that in the realm of the Sea Dragon.

There is also a legend entitled *The Devil-fish Wife*, which is circulated from Amami Archipelago down to Yaeyama Archipelago, and which has undergone changes in time. It resembles the legend of *Urashima* in that the devil-fish and the fisherman were invited by their son, the little devil-fish, to visit the world at the bottom of the sea, i.e., the Sea Dragon's Palace. Before coming back to their world, they received the gift of a treasure bowl that could produce any kind of food they desired. It was a taboo bowl. Had anybody seen the bowl, it would have rolled into a cave, and the fisherman would have died on the spot. The precious gift received as a keepsake from the Dragon's realm was considered to be the origin of wealth and the source of life.

In Ōkinawa Prefecture, the God in the Dragon's Palace is represented as a dragon / snake, but it also takes the shape of a shark or of a cow, for example in Miyako Archipelago. It is easy to understand why the shark or other sea monsters can replace the dragon as a king, but its resemblance with the cow could be explained as follows.

² *Tales of Times Now and Past.*

Formerly cows were brought as sacrificial offerings to the Dragon King. According to legends, when a boat sank, the people rescued by the Dragon King had to sacrifice a cow and bring it to him as an offering. However, during the festival dedicated to the Dragon King in Miyako Archipelago nowadays, a pig is brought as a sacrificial offering, although in the neighboring country, Korea, the old custom of sacrificing a cow is still preserved. The custom of raising pigs has spread in Ōkinawa under Chinese influence, and this is how we can explain the sacrifice of the pig on the occasion of the ritual mentioned above. This sacrificial offering might be considered as a projection of the venerated god.

From what I have already mentioned, we can see that the Sea Dragon's Palace is the origin of wealth and the source of life, part of its meaning overlapping with that of *Nirai-kanai*. The acquisition of such wealth is connected to rich harvest. In *The Golden Bough*, J. G. Fraser explains that the force of life is deeply related to the germinal force of agricultural products. In Ōkinawa, the belief in the realm of the Dragon King, considered to be the realm of the Sea God, is also related to fishing, because this god blesses people with a rich sea and promises boatmen safe sailing.

In the 8th century *Kojiki*³ there is a legend referring to the beginning of the emperors' rule, according to which a man called Tajima-mori left the palace in order to find the miraculous fruit of *tokijiku no kaku no konomi*, which was said to ensure the emperor eternal life. When he found the plant, he came back, but the emperor died immediately. In old Japan this plant was considered to grow in the ideal world called *Tokoyo*, which was beyond the sea. The pictogram features the plant as a brilliant and aromatic seasonless fruit. People today believe it to be *daidai*⁴. In ancient times it was believed that the person who ate such a fruit would live eternally. We can consider the place where such a plant grows as the fountainhead of vital force.

The concept of such a miraculous realm lying beyond the sea existed in China as well. According to a legend, during Qin (Shin) Dynasty, a person named Xu Fu (Jo Fuku) was requested to search, somewhere beyond the Eastern Sea, for the medicine that assured eternal life. As I have already mentioned, this story is related to the Taoist concept of the supernatural, and it seems that Tajima-mori's legend was spun from the same principle.

According to the 8th century *Man'yōshū*⁵, in order to reach *Tokoyo no kuni* ("the World Beyond"), you have to row for seven days, until you pass over the border of the sea. There you meet the God's daughter who takes you to that world. An article included in the collection of the 8th century reports on the natural resources, geophysical conditions and oral traditions in the area of Kyōto, entitled *Tangoguni Fudoki*, mentions the presence of the Turtle Princess who makes a sign and tells to shut your eyes. You are immediately taken to *Hōrai-san*, in other words to *Tokoyo no Kuni* that lies beyond the sea. There, on the boundless island, lies a magnificent palace.

It is true that the Chinese concept of the supernatural had a strong influence upon Japanese people, but it does not mean that the idea of *Tokoyo* in old Japan was a mere imitation of the Chinese image of the Otherworld. Mainland Japan is an island and sea trade was practiced in ancient times as well, so the Chinese concept must have been combined later with the

³ *Record of Ancient Matters* (712).

⁴ A kind of bitter orange, whose name is homophonous for "generation after generation".

⁵ The earliest extant collection of Japanese poetry.

Japanese one.

A legend inserted in the 8th century *Nihon Shoki*⁶ features the mythological times prior to the rule of the emperors when, together with the gods who created the country, the god *Sukunahikona no mikoto* sprang out of a millet trunk (the god was of an extremely little stature) and fled to *Tokoyo no Kuni*. This little god is called the God of *Sake* in *Kojiki*, but at the same time he lives in the World Beyond. On the other hand, the hen appears in *Kojiki* as a sacred bird that lives in *Tokoyo no Kuni*, being called “the singing bird of the realm of the dead”. It is true that as an insular country, Japan was highly influenced by Chinese concepts, but it also devised its own original conceptions about the Otherworld.

We can admit that from this point of view there are similarities between *Niraikanai* in Ōkinawa and *Tokoyo no Kuni* in ancient Japan. Due to the fact that people’s life in Ōkinawa is largely dependent on the sea, they received various cultural stimuli from the outside, but at the same time the inhabitants of the archipelago imagined an Otherworld of their own, a place lying somewhere beyond the sea. *Niraikanai* in Ōkinawa does not take the concrete shape of the Chinese supernatural *Hōrai-san* or that of the realm described in *Tangoguni Fudoki*, written under Chinese influence, and that is why it can be regarded but as a rather ambiguous realm. I think we can leave things at this simple stage.

3. The Visit of Gods in Ōkinawa

It is believed that there are gods belonging to the World Beyond who descend to earth, among people.

The Japanese festivals in which gods are worshiped take the following pattern: people welcome the god at a temporary abode specially made for the occasion, they pray to the god, treat him to food and *sake*, then share food with him, entertain him, and finally they perform a ritual through which they send the god back to his world. It is believed that the gods who descend to earth may either take a concrete shape or remain invisible spirits.

Most of the festivals in Ōkinawa observe the same pattern. For instance, as I have already mentioned, it is believed that in Taketomi Island, at the festival *Yūnkai*, when people address prayers to the god for abundant harvests, the god from *Niraikanai* descends to earth, invisible, in front of the rock called *Nīranseki*.

I am going to introduce gods who take concrete shapes when they come down to earth. *Mayunganashi*, the God of Abundant Harvests, is believed to descend from the Heaven or from the Otherworld and to bring villagers rich crops. According to a legend in the village Kabira in Ishigaki Island (Yaeyama Archipelago), this god makes his appearance on the first day of the festival, marking the turn of the season (*shitsu*). It is a custom that was practiced in many villages some time ago, but now it survived only in Kabira.

According to the old lunar-solar calendar, January is considered in mainland Japan an important moment at the turn of the seasons. For this reason, many significant festivals take place in this month. The big festivals from Amami Islands up to Ōkinawa Prefecture are held from May to September, according to the same calendar, because they are closely connected to

⁶ *Chronicle of Japan* (720).

the cycle of the growth of rice and millet. The agricultural works of sowing and seeding start here in October, and in May the following year people harvest the crops. In the span of time between harvesting and the next sowing, there are festivals to celebrate the harvest and to welcome a new year of abundance. On the occasion of the festivals at the turn of the seasons (*setsu* festivals, which are called *shitsu* in Ōkinawa), people use freshly drawn water, hoping to become younger, a custom similar to that performed in mainland Japan on New Year, i.e., the first water drawn on the morning of New Year's day.

The population of the village Kabira in Ishigaki Island totals 500 inhabitants. Except for those engaged in agriculture, there are many who deal with tourism, which benefits from the gorgeous beauty of the sea and the sights that are said to change color like the rainbow. *Shitsu* is a festival dedicated to agriculture, held over a period of five days, in August or September. It is the period of time when gods are thanked for the harvest and petitioned for future abundance and happiness.

On the first day of the festival, starting at 8 o'clock in the morning and going until sunset, two gods (the main god and the accompanying one) – with their faces hidden by hand towels, clad in raincoats and wearing hats made of *kuba* (a kind of coconut palm) leaves, and resting on walking sticks – chant sacred verses in unusual tones and go the rounds households predicting health, prosperity and rich harvests for the ensuing year. Those who play the parts of the gods are young men in the community, who first purify themselves with the water of the sacred spring that flows on the outskirts of the village. The verses they chant describe the growth of the crops, from seeding to harvesting. The words are thought to have magic power, and people hope they will turn into reality. After the tall and stout god *Mayunganashi* has chanted verses for about an hour, he is invited into the guest room by the head of the family, where he is treated to dainty dishes. The master shares food with the god, *Mayunganashi* not uttering any words except for a simple “yes”, now and again. The ritual of the communion between gods and people is also well known in mainland Japan, where it is called *naorai*.

The visits paid by *Mayunganashi* end at daybreak. He goes back to the place where he dressed himself as a god, and he resumes his former attire.

Mayunganashi is thought to descend to earth from Heaven or from the Otherworld, once a year, in order to bless people's houses and to predict rich crops, prosperity and health. To conclude, one of the concrete shapes the god can take is that of a man covered with a raincoat and a hat made of *kuba* leaves. This god is said not to come from *Niraikanai* and people think that the force of predicting good harvests is to be found in the very magic words he uses.

I would like to pay attention to a matter in dispute, i.e., that of the connection between this god and *Nirantafuyan*, the god who is sent back to *Niraikanai* on the fifth day of the festival *Shitsu*.

The *Devil-fish Wife* legend, I have already mentioned, was considered as a humorous and erotic story in mainland Japan in the 18th century, but as it moved from island to island, it came to be, in Miyako Island, a sacred legend in which *Utaki*, the sacred grove, originates. It belongs to the cultural context of people's fear of gods, and it is thus invested with a sacred character.

The holy words uttered by *Mayunganashi* are dialectally different, being also strongly influenced by the words used during the Shintō ritual of fertility called *Ta-asobi*, which has been practiced in mainland Japan since the 15th century. Moreover, the custom of going round to bless

each household, dressed as a god, covered with a straw raincoat and a bamboo hat, is practiced in mainland Japan as well. That's why I believe that the rituals of worshiping gods when they descend to earth are strongly influenced by festivals and performing arts in mainland Japan, which have spread widely. They have been incorporated into Ōkinawa's old folk belief in *Niraikanai* and the rituals dedicated to the gods descending from *Niraikanai* combined with the newer ritual dedicated to *Mayunganashi*.

Besides *Mayunganashi*, there are another two gods who are believed to bring rich crops to people, namely *Akamata* and *Kuromata*, the belief in them having spread to several places in Yaeyama Archipelago. These two gods make their appearance on the second day of the Harvest Festival, *Hōnen-matsuri* (dedicated to the abundant harvest of rice and millet), which takes place in June, according to the old calendar.

The Harvest Festival lasts for two days. On the first day there is the ritual of thanksgiving for rich crops, dedicated to the God abiding in *Utaki*, while the rituals of celebrating a future abundant harvest are performed on the second day. *Akamata* and *Kuromata* descend from *Niraikanai* on the second day of the festival.

One of the four places where this festival takes place in this form is Aragusuku Island, which is currently being depopulated. Nowadays, there are only two inhabited houses, but tens of people return to their native place on the occasion of the Harvest Festival. On the second evening of the festival, the gods are thought to pass through the cave called Nabindō and to make their appearance in the village afterwards. People believe the gods go the rounds of households to bless them with rich crops and then leave the village the next morning, at dawn. According to folk belief, the two gods descend from *Niraikanai*. The cave they pass through makes the connection between the two worlds. The gods wear masks carved in wood, and their bodies are covered all over with leaves. The god who wears a red mask is *Akamata*, while the one with a black mask is *Kuromata*. As I have already mentioned, these gods go round each household, like *Mayunganashi*, but the rituals in their honor are by far stricter. For instance, in ancient times, the people who came from other islands to attend the Harvest Festival had to bury the lower half of their bodies in the sand on the shore lest they should be able to move willingly. Even nowadays, it is forbidden to take photos of the gods or to record their voices. All prohibitions and taboos must be linked to the awe gods rouse in people.

In Ōkinawa Prefecture, daily life is set against the background of the overwhelming force of nature. Calamities or other unusual phenomena have been ascribed to the will of gods. Local Shamanism has consolidated the way of thinking and believing. As a result of daily hardships, people came to actually perceive the existence of deities. The expression "we fear gods" is the impression left by priests and shaman-women who have a close connection to gods. It is believed that the awe inspired by gods is more strongly manifested in the rituals dedicated to the gods *Akamata* and *Kuromata*, being amplified by traditional Shintō rituals.

Unlike the ritual mentioned above, in other places belonging to Yaeyama Archipelago, we do not come across so many taboos as regards the god *Miroku*⁷, who makes his appearance on the occasion of the annual Harvest Festival. On the second day of the festival, children also take part in the religious practices related to the celebration of the harvest. The rituals are performed

⁷ One of the Bodhisattvas.

in the sacred grove called *Utaki*, and *Miroku* is said to love children. This god is portly, wears a merry mask, and holds a fan in his hand. Children follow him, carrying stalks of rice and millet.

The concept of *Miroku* is rooted in early Buddhist religion, being considered, in east and south-east Asia, as a kind of Messiah who descended to earth as a savior of mankind. According to Noboru Miyata, the belief in *Miroku* was assimilated, in Yaeyama Archipelago, to the earlier existing belief in the descent of gods to earth. The oldest mask *Miroku* used in this area was brought from Vietnam in the 18th century, as a token of the foreign relations Ryūkyū Kingdom carried on with this country.

It is believed that *Miroku* descends to earth once a year and brings rich crops, but he is not held in awe as are *Akamata* and *Kuromata*. *Miroku* is considered to be the God of Luck and Wealth, bestowing happiness upon people. This god is not believed to descend from the traditional Otherworld called *Niraikanai*, but from the *Realm of Miroku* – the place considered to be the fountainhead of all riches.

In all the three examples I gave above, mention is made of the descent of gods who bring rich crops with them, but in Miyako Island the stress is also laid on the rituals of purification, i.e., of warding off malevolent spirits. This ritual is performed by *Pāntō*, who makes his appearance among the villagers of some communities in Miyako Island on the occasion of the festivals in September. *Pāntō* is not a god, but a kind of goblin, having the face covered with a mask and the body wrapped in a trailing plant soiled with mud. The mud used to disguise the goblin is taken from the bottom of springs. People believe they can get rid of malevolent spirits if they are splashed with mud by *Pāntō*.

The ritual of driving away malevolent spirits from the village takes place starting with October according to the old calendar, prior to the ritual of welcoming and worshipping the ancestors' souls who have reached the status of god.

This mask is said to have drifted ashore north-east of the communities, coming from beyond the sea, but it is not thought to have come from a World Beyond, such as *Niraikanai*.

Finally I would like to speak about the descent of ancestral gods.

The ritual dedicated to ancestral gods takes place in Miyako Island and in other three islands nearby. It is a mysterious ritual during which priestesses are said to be possessed by gods and become their spokesmen. A fact worth mentioning is the stealthy narration of myths during such rituals. The duration of this ritual differs from a village to another. For instance, in two of the villages in Miyako Island, this great festival takes place between October and December, being divided into five stages, but there are also many parts of the festival we do not know much about, due to the secretiveness of the rites performed. The first stage is represented by the rites of welcoming the gods; the second stands for the priestesses' assumption of office; the third corresponds to the rite of purification, i.e., the rite of warding off malevolent spirits; the fourth is marked by the rites of celebrating the harvest in that year; the fifth stage consists in the rites of sending the gods away. In this festival, the ancestors' souls who have become gods take the place of the deities mentioned above. They perform the ritual of purification and promise people rich crops. The structure of the rituals of purification, i.e. warding off malevolent spirits, which are performed before those of invoking abundant harvests, resemble the practices performed on the occasion of the New Year in mainland Japan. Here, the ritual of driving away malevolent spirits is performed on the last day of the year, while the ritual of invoking abundant harvests takes

place on January 15th. There are many other practices in Ōkinawa that are connected to those in mainland Japan, but I think the most important ones are those I have just mentioned.

The ancestors' souls come down to earth from Heaven, during the welcoming ritual, and afterwards they return to their world. The souls who have become gods are believed to descend not from *Nirai-kanai*, but from the fountainhead of rich crops, which has the same origin for them.

Conclusion

As I have already mentioned, the inhabitants in the islands belonging to Ōkinawa Prefecture, which is surrounded by water, imagine the realm of gods as lying somewhere beyond the sea or in Heaven. Their conception of the Otherworld, as being the gods' abode from where they descend to earth, differs according to the culture that has spread and has taken roots in various parts of the prefecture.

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From Myth to Reality through Ritual – Bicchū and Shiromi Kagura –

Angela Hondru

Introduction

The myth reports realities and events from the origin of the world that are considered to remain valid as the basis and purpose of all there is. Consequently, a myth functions as a model for human activity.

The myth usually depicts an imaginative religious space and time that exist prior to the universe, *in illo tempore*, to borrow Mircea Eliade's classic expression. The beings who are the actors in this primordial time are divine.

As the prototypical story of founding and creation, the myth provides a model that is reiterated in the creation and founding of all other modes of existence. What is important in any such foundation is to relate our own time to this other time, whether this be in the form of imitation or participation. It is precisely this relation between our time and the time of the myth that is the essential factor constituting the myth, rather than the types of things founded by it. A community is thus enabled to participate in the actual renewal of the cosmos as the various elements of the ritual are observed.

The Japanese myth

In ancient myth, the Japanese world (i.e. the Japanese islands) is a creation of a primordial, divine couple who are equally the ancestors of all divine beings populating the mundane world. Izanagi and Izanami are the universal parents and creators who produced the land, mountains, rivers, waves, trees, fields, wind, fog, and the deities ruling these things.

According to the chronicle called *Kojiki*,¹ they appeared on the Takama no Hara,² as brother and sister. Standing on the Bridge of Heaven, they churned the ocean's water with a jeweled spear and then drew the spear up. The brine that dripped from the tip of the spear became the first Japanese island, Onogoro. Izanagi and Izanami descended onto the island, erected there a high pillar and a hall, then circumambulated the pillar in opposite directions. When they met, they were united, and thus the islands of Japan were born. After the birth of the islands, various other deities were born of the two creator-parents. But when Kagutsuchi (The God of Fire) was born, the mother goddess Izanami was burned to death by the heat. Izanagi descended to the land of Yomi ("the Underworld") to bring back his wife. His attempt ended in failure when he peered, against Izanami's wishes, into a dark room and saw her decaying corpse. Pursued by the enraged Izanami and her subordinate demons, Izanagi fled. After the divorce they nevertheless agreed upon, Izanagi ruled the living and Izanami the dead. He returned to the earth,

¹ *Records of Ancient Matters*, 712.

² High Plain of Heaven.

where he purified himself in the sea. As he had promised to his ex-spouse, he begot divinities on his own. For instance, twelve were born out of the various objects he had worn or carried before entering the sea (sash, trousers, waistcoat, bracelets, etc.); the following ones out of the filth he had accumulated through contact with the Underworld, etc. From his purified eyes and nose appeared three great deities, among which Amaterasu is considered to be the supreme deity in Japanese mythology.

The narrative of the Japanese cosmogonic myth moves from the initial creation to the revelation of the archetypal actions and gestures of divine beings. According to folk belief, these divine beings form the ancestral lineages of the human race. Consequently, the situation of the human race is based upon the activities, adventures, discoveries, and disappearance of these first creative ancestors, who appeared in sacred history.

These observations provide the basis for Eliade's description, in *Aspectele mitului*,³ of the way in which a religious person distinguishes two separate modes of being in the world: the sacred and the profane. The member of a traditional society may be called "homo religiosus" precisely because he perceives both a transcendent model (or "archetype") and a mundane reality that is capable of being molded to correspond to the transcendent model. Furthermore, he experiences the transcendent model as holy, that is, as manifesting absolute power and value. In fact, it is the sacred quality of the archetype that compels him to orient his life around it. The consequence of an encounter with the sacred, asserts Eliade, is the desire to remain in relation to it, to orient one's life around it in order to be filled continually with the sense of being and meaning that it evokes. In this sense, the hierophany ("appearance of the sacred") creates a new order of things. No longer do space and time make up a homogeneous continuum; one moment, or one place, has become touched by the sacred, and from that time on, it will provide a means of connecting the two realms, a center that mediates sacred and profane experience.⁴

Although under the strong impact of cultural globalization, Japanese tradition is still offering us a lot of examples of an encounter with the sacred. As a token of projecting the essence and significance of spiritual experience through action I would like to mention that there are tens of thousands of festivals, folk observances and dances, which give an exquisite color to the fascinating share of traditional and modern in Japanese people's life.

Another important thing to point out is the fact the whole Japanese universe is permeated by the sacred *kami* nature. Subject to the vagaries of climate, Japanese regarded the world about them as awesome and mysterious. A river, for example, whose proper flow determined their very existence, seemed endowed with a superior power, a numinous nature that became the basis for its deification. Thus, the term *kami*⁵ refers, beside the cosmogonic deities, to all beings and things that are awesome and worthy of reverence. The *kami* who is in charge of fertility of a territory or the well-being of its society usually reigns over the territory and can harm or destroy it when disregarded. The *kami* must be well respected; otherwise, it punishes people. There are numerous cases in which a *kami* reveals awesome and dreadful natures, and yet the same awesome *kami* often shows gentle and loving natures at the same time. It is this

³ Eliade: 2000, *passim*.

⁴ Eliade: 1978, *passim*.

⁵ Deity.

belief that underlies Japanese traditional folk practices.

Kami range from powerful nature and ancestor deities to spirits of insignificant objects and are virtually infinite in number. Beliefs and forms of worship are equally heterogeneous but are often directed at objects of nature such as trees, rocks, or mountains, which are interpreted either as abodes of the *kami* or as *kami* themselves. We can also encounter the *kami* of a land, of an oven, of road, etc. Not to be overlooked are the tutelary *kami* of concrete places. In other words, each *kami* was assigned to the specific role within the world of meaning in the “religious” (not in the Western sense) life of the early Japanese people. The old chronicles estimate eight hundred myriad *kami* whose propitiation filled the heart of the primitive Japanese with awe and his time with rites and festivals.

From myth to ritual

The age the myth transports us to is in fact beyond any human being’s awareness and hence the realities dealt with are different from the facts people are concerned with in their everyday human lives. As such, it occurs side by side with sacred places or objects and sacred acts, i.e. rituals.

As I have already mentioned, ritual arises from and celebrates the encounter with the sacred, the mysterious reality that is always manifested as of a wholly different order from ordinary or “natural” realities. Traditional communities seek to live in continual contact with those realities and to flee or to transform the inconsequential banality of ordinary life, thus giving rise to the repetitions of ritual. It is the underlying purpose of rituals to recall and renew the sacred hierophanies. The enactment of rituals renews the experiential focus on the sacred. The reenactment of the primeval or constitutive acts by which the cosmos came into being is of utmost importance to a traditional community. Mircea Eliade, who has devoted many studies to this almost universal trait in ritual, has called it “the myth of the eternal return”. To exist truly is to remember, and even more to reenact the foundational events; to forget is to dissolve the world in chaos. By repeating the primordial deeds of the deities, human beings become as the deities, establishing their divine world.

On the other hand, *kami*’s world is traditionally associated with forces of growth and renewal. Japanese deities are believed to come and go in a cycle of life and death that parallels the mortality of man himself, i.e. they are thought to grow old like human beings and if they are neglected, they might extinguish. Lest this should happen, they are to be subjected to renewal rituals at certain points of time. They are believed to be filled with mysterious power and their world can be controlled with the methods either of magic or religious ritual and prayer. While admitting the weakening of the religious aspect, it is however clear that profane life is still governed by old beliefs when it comes to disasters and mishaps, i.e. evils brought about by malevolent forces. It is believed that if deities are treated reverently through offerings and rituals, they leave their world and visit the earth in order to bring people prosperity and fresh force. Visiting deities are thought to bring new power into the community at key points of the calendar representing renewal and change, thus restoring the community’s internal order as well. Renewal of life-power among deities and human beings in a given life-space is essential. This renewal occurs through a set of ritualistic actions in which people collectively welcome and extend

hospitality to the deities. This is the background of all Japanese traditional festivals and *kagura* – the sacred dance – could not have deviated from it.

Kagura shares a basic structure with all traditional observances: a) *kami-oroshi* (“inviting the deity’s spirit to descend”) or *kami-mukae* (“welcoming the deity”); b) *kami-asobi* (“entertaining the deity”); c) *kami-okuri* (“sending back the deity”).

The first part is strictly ritualistic and concerned with preparing the conditions for the presence of the deity. To this part belong ceremonies that have as a purpose the purification of the place where the deities will temporarily reside. Once the deity is present, the entertaining of the divine guest becomes paramount. While the first part has tended to remain the same through centuries, the entertainment part could, theoretically, present anything because *kagura* is meant not only for deities, but also for people attending the ritual dance. In fact, the entertainment part of the *kagura* has often changed to reflect contemporary tastes and fashions. Even Santa Claus appears, for instance, during *Hana-matsuri*.⁶

Kagura claims a mythological origin, all the more the myth of Japan’s creation tells less of the islands’ physical formation than their ritual creation. The most popular myth ritually enacted is that of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, who hid herself in a cave, offended by the pranks of her brother, Susano-o. First, he broke down the division of the rice fields laid out by Amaterasu, filled up the ditches, and strewed excrement in the palace. While she was sitting in her weaving hall overseeing the weaving of the deities’ garments, he broke a hole in the roof, and through it let fall a piebald horse that he had flayed. The woman weaving the heavenly garments was so alarmed by this sight that she struck her genitals against the shuttle and died.⁷

Terrified, Amaterasu hid herself in the Rock Cave of Heaven, and the heavenly world became dark. Eight hundred myriad deities gathered to lure Amaterasu out of the cave. Among them, Ama-no-Uzume, a female deity, played the most important role. “Her Augustness Heavenly-Alarming-Female⁸ hanging the heavenly clubmoss of the Heavenly Mount Kagu as a sash, and making the heavenly spindle-tree her head-dress, and binding the leaves of the bamboo-grass of the Heavenly Mount Kagu in a posy for her hands, and laying a sounding board before the door of the Heavenly Rock-Dwelling, and stamping till she made it resound and doing as if possessed by a Deity, and pulling out the nipples of her breasts, pushing down her skirt-string usque ad privates partes. Then the Plain of High Heaven shook, and the eight hundred myriad Deities laughed together.”⁹ Her curiosity aroused, Amaterasu opened the door of the Rock Cave of Heaven and came out. Light came back to the world.

What we understand from the episode that took place in front of the cave is that Amaterasu was pacified through dance and that dance can therefore be considered effective with gods.

The ritual of pacification has its origin in the ancient rite named *tamafuri*.¹⁰ Hence the belief that through shaking or swinging an object, the *tama* (“soul”) could be stirred and

⁶ “The Festival of Flowers” belongs to the *yudate*-type of *kagura* (i.e. purification through boiled water), according to Yasuji Honda’s classification.

⁷ *The Kojiki*, p. 61-62.

⁸ Ama-no-Uzume.

⁹ *The Kojiki*, p. 64-65.

¹⁰ *Tamafuri* (lit. “shaking the soul”) was meant to persuade the soul of a sick man not to leave his body or even to revive it.

magically transferred to it, after pacification and revitalization through ritual. This accounts for the wide range of *torimono* (bells, sticks, fans, swords, *sakaki* branches or sprigs, etc.) that performers manipulate during the rituals.

As basically concealed and invisible, *kami* respond to prayers by descending to earth and dwelling in tangible objects such as sacred space (called *yorishiro*) – trees or rocks, *torimono* or human beings. The prayers are addressed to *kami* through ritual, and then, following the ritual, *kami* return to the invisible world, as I mentioned when showing the basic structure of a festival.

According to folk belief, by invocation or entertainment, the deities' potentially benevolent powers are exploited and their potentially malevolent attributes avoided. And one major means by which peaceful coexistence with the gods is thought to be effective is through the performance of *kagura*-dance.

The most probable origin of the word *kagura* is today considered to be a euphonic contraction of *kam(u)kura*, i.e. “the seat of the deity”, the place or abode where the spirit or power is supposed to dwell, while presiding over, or taking part in the performance. The second character in *kagura* means “entertainment”.

Kagura has become a performing art of such a great diversity that it will be impossible to classify it. Though it distinguishes itself through peculiar characteristics according to region, it does not lack the common denominator: the religious or / and mythological background and the entertaining aspect.

The place where the *kagura* is to be performed is chosen either by the shrine priests or by the *tōban*¹¹. It is very difficult to cover all the types, but in the main they could be classified as follows:

1) A temporary place in front of the *mikoshi*¹² which consists in a straw mat spread on the road; *miko*¹³ use it for their dances.

2) The place where *kagura* is performed can also be an alley in the precincts of the shrine. For instance, at Iwashimizu Hachiman-gū in Kyoto, the three *mikoshi* (where the deities reside over the period of the festival) are placed inside the temporary structure named “Kinuyashiki”, made up of four pillars which support it; its walls are covered with silk.

3) Most *kagura* are performed in a shrine building called *kagura-den*, especially made for dances. At Kasuga-taisha, for instance, it is danced by *miko*, while *Iwami-kagura* (Shimane prefecture), *Hayachine-kagura* (Iwate prefecture), *Bicchū-kagura* (Okayama prefecture), etc. are performed either by priests or by *tayū*.¹⁴ In case there is a curtain, dances are performed in front of it. In case there are two curtains (e.g. *Bicchū-kagura*), when the big one is drawn, a little curtain hides the dancer's legs. After the performer has danced a couple of minutes behind it, he steps from its side and then the large curtain is closed. This part of the dance signifies the long road covered by the deity in order to reach the place where *kagura* is performed.

4) There are dances performed on a stage set up in the open, called *kōdono*. Many of the *Bicchū-kagura* belong to this type.

¹¹ *Tōban* is the person in charge with the festival.

¹² *Mikoshi* is a portable shrine.

¹³ *Miko* is a shrine maiden, but originally she was a virgin consecrated to a deity. *Miko* also play the role of mediums in certain rituals.

¹⁴ *Tayū* is a layman who performs sacred dances.

5) The stage in the open put up near the main sanctuary of a shrine is named *mikōya*, such as that made for *Shiromi-kagura*.

6) The assembly hall of a village can also serve as a stage for the *kagura*, as for instance, in case of *Hana-matsuri*, which belongs to *Okumikawa-kagura*.

7) Many of the *kagura* are performed in the *tōban*'s house, which becomes the village's sacred place during the festival.

To conclude, there are various types of places where *kagura* can be performed, but irrespective of the place, mention should be made of the fact that the deity is always "present" there because, first of all, the dance is an offering made to him by his "offspring",¹⁵ as Honda calls people.

Never failing with the *kagura* are *yorishiro* and *torimono* – objects for the deities to temporarily reside in, namely during the spectacle dedicated to them. When speaking of *yorishiro* as temporary vessels for the *kami*, Carmen Blacker avers that such instruments are "as though the numinous presence, like lightning streaking down a conductor, could be induced by such means to descend from his higher plane to ours".¹⁶

The generic old term is *mitegura* ("a divine seat in a man's hand") and it can include: branches of (the sacred tree) *sakaki*, *sasa* (dwarf bamboo) leaves, staffs, little bells, *gohei*,¹⁷ fans, swords, arch and bows, straw mats, etc. Such objects are believed to magically help deities to descend and to be active during the festival. The sacred rope (*shimenawa*) which marks the sacred place where *kagura* is to be performed is decked with all kinds of paper cuttings in the form of the sun, the moon, *torii*,¹⁸ horses, fish, etc. Their role is to ward off malevolent forces and keep the enclosure pure and clean.

One more thing I would like to mention is the *byakkai*, a kind of cupola hanging from the ceiling, which serves as a vehicle for the deities' descent. As I am going to focus my attention on *Bicchū-kagura*, some details are needed.

Byakkai consists here of a wooden framework to which is tied, in the very middle, a little bag with rice and coins. It is called *byakkai no tama* ("the ball" or "the heart of the cupola"). The framework is covered with white paper on which it is usually written *Takama no Hara no Kami* ("The deities of the Celestial Plain"). Something like colored confetti are also added to the cupola. Strips of white or colored *kirigami*¹⁹ – real pieces of art which require elaborate skill – are stuck to the edges of the framework and they hang down wonderfully. Due to the string tied to the framework, which is generally pulled by an assigned person, it moves to the rhythm of the drum like a living being.

From myth to reality through ritual: Bicchū and Shiromi Kagura

Studies of contemporary phenomena that ignore the premodern ideas and beliefs will never be able to offer a comprehensive understanding of the matrix out of which they emerged or

¹⁵ Honda: 1993, p. 215.

¹⁶ Blacker: 1986, p. 20.

¹⁷ *Gohei* is a wand tipped with strips of white paper, used in purification and other Shintō rites.

¹⁸ *Torii* are arched-way gates that mark the entrance at Shinto shrines.

¹⁹ *Kirigami* are all kinds of images cut out of paper, such as: the sun, the moon, fish, flowers, etc.

against which they reacted.

Japanese rituals maintain links between humans and *kami* through a body of sacred lore administered through expressions of worship and appeasement. Most *kami* are contacted to ensure ongoing maintenance of the normally benign social relationship with local communities. In this context, *kami* are held to share human pleasure in the performing arts, most notably dancing. They are believed to love display and ceremony. Thus both living and *kami* are thought to watch a *kagura* performance.

Out of the hundreds of *kagura* Yasuji Honda discusses in his elaborate study (which took him over twenty years), I am going to focus attention only upon *Bicchū Kagura* and *Shiromi Kagura* in order to show the sacred dance as part of rituals that revere, thank and entreat deities.

The main purpose of *Bicchū-kagura* is to pacify the deity *Kōjin* which is connected to the local primitive belief of Bicchū district²⁰ and that's why it is also called *Kōjin-kagura*. *Kōjin* is the local guardian deity abiding in a sacred tree or a small shrine, being celebrated by parishioners of a village or of a group of villages on the occasion of autumnal agricultural festivals and New Year. They call a priest every year to celebrate their *kami*, but the great festival dedicated to *Kōjin* is usually held every six years, usually in October, when a special place is chosen or a special stage for the great anniversary is set up. On such occasions the *kagura* becomes a gorgeous show which takes place from evening till morning, bringing back home all the families together, with children and grandchildren, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces. It is the reason for which it is also called "the *kagura* of the umbilical cord".

While the artistic elements have increased in the long run, being considered in the area the only possible spiritual amusement, the traditional elements are still conspicuous.

Since *Kōjin-kagura* is an event mainly focused upon the pacification of the local protecting deity, the first segment (*kami-oroshi*) and the oracle spoken by the *tayū* as a result of the possession by the deity are considered to be the most important elements. The priests and parishioners start for the local shrine to take offerings to the local deity first, and then the priest or the *tayū* transfers the *kami* to the place of entertainment.

To show that it serves for the descent of the *kami*, the *byakkai* moves up and down, from right to left and from left to right like a being possessed, leaving the impression of dancing, while the deities are encouraged through incantation and through drum beats to come down. After the myriads of deities have gathered, the strings are tied up in a manner that suggests the Milky Way. *Kōjin-kagura* starts with the pacification of the deities through incantation, the atmosphere being from the very start a mysterious one.

Under the divine guidance of the celestial nephew's guardian – Sarutahiko-no-mikoto, the first dance belonging to the era of the deities is presented. Most dances here re-enact the myths, i.e. they imitate mythical events like those recorded in the early chronicles mentioned above. For instance, the dance of Sarutahiko is based on the myth of his accompanying the procession of the celestial nephew of Amaterasu, Ninigi-no-mikoto, who was sent to earth to rule the people of Japan. "I am an Earthly Deity named the Deity Prince of Saruta. The reason for my coming here is that, having heard of the descent of the august child of the Heavenly Deities, I have come

²⁰ The west part of Okayama prefecture.

humbly to meet him and respectfully offer myself as His Augustness's vanguard."²¹

Saruta defeated all those who opposed him on the bridge between heaven and earth. However, instead of one pathfinder, we can see two or four in nowadays' *Bicchū-kagura*. Their dance is sprightly and vigorous, and at the same time awe inspiring, nevertheless pointing out the virtues of the celestial guide. It is considered both a dance having its roots in Japanese mythology and a ritual one, as it performs the purification function.

The acts of the most important mythical figures are transformed into shared living deeds by means of performance, i.e. they manifest themselves through performance. Performers offer participants a concrete, sensuous, and sometimes overwhelmingly powerful experience of cultural values, giving at the same time the feeling that not only will religious ritual be secularized but that aesthetic performance will be sacralized. The performance of "the four Saruta" shares both in the authority of recollection and the creativity of the imagination.

Permeated with strong folk tradition, dance continually changes. Though initially a dance to ward off evil spirits, Saruta's dance has become an important lively entertaining fact.

There follow three dances with mythological themes, representative of *Bicchū-kagura*: *Ama-no-iwato-biraki* ("The Opening of the Rock Cave of Heaven"), *Kuni-yuzuri* ("The Giving up of the Territory"), and *Orochi-taiji* ("The extirpation of the Big Serpent").

The first myth mentioned above features Susano-o-no-mikoto, the God of the Storm, who, as I have already mentioned, committed all kinds of unruly pranks against his elder sister, the Sun Goddess who retaliated by retiring into the Rock Cave of Heaven. Her concealment in the cave symbolizes the sun's death. This myth explains renewal and it may refer to an ancient winter solstice ritual in which a weakened sun had to be reinvigorated out of the fear that otherwise "she" would be too weak to assure agricultural growth in the ensuing year.

Plunged in darkness, the eight hundred myriads of *kami*, under the guidance of the wise Omoikane, took counsel on the most effective means of enticing her out of her hiding place. Ama-no-uzume's dance in front of Amaterasu's cave – which was mentioned above – had two purposes: a ritualistic action performed in order to become divinely possessed; second, the dance served to placate Amaterasu and reinvigorate the Sun. This myth can be considered an interpretation of *tamafuri* and later *tamashizume* ("spirit pacification") rituals of ancient *kagura*, which expressed the old concept of death and the belief in resurrection and healing through magic and trance.

Ama-no-uzume's dance was also accompanied by stamping and laughter. As in other Japanese rituals, stamping is used to purify space or, as in agricultural rituals, to strengthen weakened spirits and deities, especially those who fertilize the earth. Laughing must also have had ritual purposes, with the role of breaking the tension between man and spirit. Last but not least, the myth testifies to the efficacious power of laughter, as well as the gods' "appreciation" of humor.

Spectators hold their breath during the next dance, featuring the giving up of Nakatsu-kuni governed by Okuninushi, the son of Susano-o, in favor of Amaterasu. The dance is full of funny gestures made by the main actor, *hyottoko*, who tries to mediate and settle the problem. He wears

²¹ *The Kojiki*, p. 130.

a special funny mask and exchanges comic dialogues with the drummer, making people enjoy the long-time *kagura*. The comic pieces reflect the local color of village life through use of the local dialect and by audience's response of laughter or cheers to what is being said. The guests enjoy the gossip about individuals or situations interwoven in the comedy plots. The drummer often accents punch lines of the comic character with various drum strokes, adding to the humor of the plays.

Hyottoko's remarks can be a metaphor for both normative and innovative behavior. Under religious auspices the dancer is freed from the everyday restrictions on etiquette and thus is able to present secular messages and critiques.

There appear to be humor and an underlying feeling that these acts are socially acceptable and that through them participants will be purged of whatever negative emotions they may harbor.

Okuninushi wears the smiling and happy mask of Daikoku, the God of Wealth. He also carries a sack full of *tane*, i.e. "seeds of happiness" (oranges, candies, chocolate, etc.) which he throws to the audience. Not only children, but adults as well, indifferent to what happens around them, strive to catch as many "seeds" as they can.

The ritual of throwing *tane* marks a moment that calls for special attention and abrupt transition from myth to reality. Daikoku's dance is a vehicle that incorporates inchoate ideas in visible human form and modifies inner experience as well as social action.

Okuninushi asks for Kotoshironushi-no-mikoto's advice and he decides to give up the territory after hard fight carried on by one of his descendants. All the dances are full of dynamism.

Extremely impressive is the dance featuring the killing of the huge eight-headed serpent. The mythological theme is quite familiar. On account of his evil deeds, Susano-o is expelled from the Heavenly Plain and forced to move to Izumo. On his way he meets two old people who lament over having lost seven daughters, who were swallowed by the giant serpent, and they are on the point to lose their last daughter that evening. Susano-o promises to save the girl on condition that they prepare eight barrels full of sake for the eight heads of the serpent and in exchange, he asks for Princess Inada to marry. The old people agree, the plot works and the serpent is killed. The main events leading to the killing are danced, from a slow movement to a rapid, climatic one.

Serpents, on a cosmic level, possess a complex value, being forces of stability or of disorder. Orochi is a chaotic being in Japanese mythology, presented as a fierce, devouring monster, responsible for death and disorder, but it is vanquished by the *kami*.

I would like to call attention to the different values of the mythical serpents – Orochi and Kōjin, the former the symbol of evil and disorder, the latter of protection and strength, being a powerful and helpful being.

The last dance of *Bicchū-kagura* is *Kami-gakari* ("the possession by the deity") through which the deity transmits his oracle. In his particular manner of trance, *tayū* acts as a bridge between reality (i.e. our world) and *kami*'s world. He cajoles the renewed divinity to descend, to dance, and to deliver blessings. The *tayū* is thrown into his possessed state and induced to deliver the deity's oracle.

The dance is performed around a huge straw serpent which is said to represent the deity

Kōjin. The two dancers hold torches or other *torimono*, which they touch against each other any time they meet. After a couple of minutes the object in the *tayū*'s hands begins to shake, furiously flailing up and down. The dance consists of torso bending and swaying, head and arm gestures, and some stepping and floor patterns, as well as passing under the serpent. After the ardent dance of the *tayū*, which results in trembling because of the deity's possession, he flops over the huge straw snake which had previously been slung across the room. Spectators find out the god's will through his mumbling after being appeased, in the middle of the stage, under the cupola, surrounded by the straw serpent. In the abnormal state all his utterances are accepted as the voice of the *kami* dwelling in him and speaking through him. Evil spirits are believed to have been warded off; rice offering is given and the deity is required to prophesy on the fortunes of the community during the coming time, to forecast the amount of rice.

Kami-gakari may serve as an activating agent for a specific kind of change: giving oneself temporarily to a supernatural being. This metamorphic process is usually accompanied by "altered" (even though feigned) consciousness through frenzied movements. Possession involves the belief that humans can contact *kami* and influence them to act on a person's or community's behalf.

Bicchū-kagura has preserved old beliefs, as the last dance shows us, without losing its spiritual fascination for local people. Due to dancers' creativity, many new elements have been nevertheless added on every occasion, raising it to the status of fine art. It numbers among the important cultural properties of Japan.

Bicchū Kagura takes a stand at the very heart of the return of mythical figures in the festive contemporary – a celebration of roots and the desire to join with otherness through prototypes that are not representative, but are lived here and now.

*

Though the forces of the sun are said to wane after the winter solstice, the heavenly body seems to reign over the atmosphere of *Shiromi-kagura* in Miyazaki Prefecture thanks to the conspicuous *ōshime* which is tied by strings to the only simple white cupola. The *ōshime* is made up of a bamboo pole decked with green brushwood. Its upper part is adorned with white sacred wands which represent seven generations of celestial divinities, while the lower part is decorated with colored sacred wands representing five generations of earth deities. At the top is raised a horizontal red cloth called *kumo* ("cloud") with the sun drawn in the middle. As this *kagura* is performed around the winter solstice, the *ōshime* itself looks like helping the weakened sun to regain its forces.

In front of the *ōshime* there is a large shelf with offerings, never failing here the wild boars' heads, as *Shiromi-kagura* preserves old beliefs connected to their sacrifice. On December 16th takes place a ritual for pacifying the souls of all wild boars hunted during the past year. It is performed in the river bed in case of Shiromi village. After a small wood fire has been kindled, the wild boar's head is grilled, while the left ear is cut into seven pieces and then a skewer pushed through each piece. After being grilled, they are dedicated, together with sake, as offerings to the seven gods in the mountains nearby.

Shiromi-kagura which starts two days before the ritual in the river bed consists of

thirty-three dances, some of them enjoying an amazing tradition. As the space is limited, I will focus attention upon some of the most representative, though very difficult to choose among them.

The first thing worth mentioning is the ritual called *mensama-muake* (“the welcoming of masks”) which points out the importance of masks as instruments to show the presence of deities in the festival. The masks used here are brought from five subsidiary shrines and are shouldered by priests to the main shrine, i.e. Shiromi-jinja. Here they are pacified by means of religious rites and then by entertainment.

As I have already mentioned, purification is a “must” in all rituals. The first dance to be encountered here as well is called *Kiyoyama-kagura* and is thought to be a dance of purification including at the same time thanks addressed to the deities for having come down and for their intention to entertain people. The boundary between sacred and profane is thus clearly established and then follow dance after dance for over twenty-four hours. One more thing to lay the stress on is the fact that not only *Shiromi-kagura* but many of the important observances, whose aim is to entertain deities are held at night as it has been believed since ancient times that magic rituals are more easily performed in the dark.

In Shiromi as elsewhere, elementary and secondary school children open the series of dances entertaining both people and *kami*. The pure children may be seen as summoners of *kami*, as magical means of establishing contact with the *kami*’s world and of luring deities to descend into the sacralized space made ready to receive them.

Besides being considered pure souls unaltered by defilement, which means an easier communion with *kami*, the children’s dance is also thought to be very important for them as a rite of initiation. Gennep considers initiation to be a rite of passage. As a rite of passage or transition, the children’s dance may be seen as an encounter with the sacred. The transition is therefore a profound one, with the children emerging from the passage changed spiritually. Instruction in behavior is essential and the knowledge imparted during initiation might help with keeping the tradition. The revelation of sacred myths and the true meaning of ritual objects cannot be overlooked. Children carry little sacred paper on their backs, arranged in crosses, as well as bells, fans, and trays – all important utensils to be encountered in any observance to show the presence of deities. To a certain degree, these two forms of knowledge are interrelated.

Rites of initiation provide for and fulfill at least one crucial task: that of inculcating a society’s rules and values to those who are to become its full-fledged members. One way the communication of society’s arcane knowledge is achieved is through direct instruction. Culture is transmitted not merely as a codified system of principles and messages, but as an intrinsic learning process, embracing experience. On a deeper level, children are moved to understand something of their lives and their places within the cosmos when they enact ritual. Rituals become thus transformative experiences.

Among the many dances, I would like to mention *Jiwari*, which is a specific dance for pacifying the place where the sacred dance is performed.

There are still deities to be called down, like *Udo-kishin* which wears a demon mask. On the way, his facing a *tayū* shows the communion between deity and man.

Some dances can be performed only by high priests, such as *Nishinomiya Kagura* or

Sumiyoshi's dance. They are important deities and, as a result, much honored.

In some dances never failing are the arch and bows, like in the dance called *Shōgun*, which suggests the protection of Amaterasu's rice field from enemies and evil forces.

In *Shiromi-kagura* the straw serpent symbolizes the local deity, the same as in *Bicchū Kagura*. After being sacrificed, it is finally pacified in his own woods. Cutting the serpent during the dance means breaking off all wild fancies which might bring about harm to the community as it is clearly explained during the dialogue called *tsuna no mondō* ("the dialogue of the rope"). The dialogue is frequently an element of the process by which symbolic meanings are exchanged among priests or *tayū*, on the one hand, and "divine actors" wearing masks, on the other hand. The lore of sacred and profane belief, often intertwined, is told and retold in dance.

The priest who fumbles in front of the Cave Door in the dark wears the mask of Tachigaraō, representing the body of the deity who drew out Amaterasu.

The demon who destroys *byakkai* dances alone, having the "heaven" as target. The dance is nevertheless called *Ama-home* ("Praising the Heaven"). The demon strives to thrust the sack attached to the cupola, which contains confetti-like five-colored pieces of paper. They represent the seeds of all things in the universe.

Heya-no-kami ("The room's deity") impersonates the smiling and happy face of Ama-no-uzume who gets entwined with *oni-kami* ("demon-deities"). Her dance explains the way of positive and negative (Yin and Yang principles) starting with Izanagi and Izanami, namely the creation of universe and the apparition of human race, i.e. the Japanese. It is thus considered to be a dance of fertility.

The six demons in the *Shikijin*-dance pretend attacking an old woman and then thrust their staffs at one another, making droll gestures. The staff is the phallic symbol of fertility.

The fierce god in the dance entitled *Mikasa-kōjin* throws down the little caps hanging from the "heaven" and puts them on the heads of the eight children who dance in pairs, miming the transplant of rice seedlings. In the end, the children get money from two masked men, the money representing wages for "their work in the paddy-field".

Neither the dances encountered so far, nor *Mikasa-kōjin* is merely a ritual to be enacted at the will of the participants. There has to be a link between the rite and correct time and place. Both the profane interactions of the social order and the agricultural cycles on which human life depends are subject to decay and disharmony. Therefore a cycle of festivals in the course of the year periodically renews environment and society. Festivals are calculated to fall on specific conjunctions of the cosmic markers of time. Only under the circumstances in which the human protagonists in a ritual are joined with the cosmic cycle of time can a rite renew the world by reenacting the creative events of primordial time, at the threshold between timelessness and time. Dance cannot sanction anything without reference to the rightness of time and place, when the vital energies of the cosmos are to be helped.

The religious goal of this children's dance is additionally based on a belief in sympathetic magic. By presenting an act in the context of dance, one gains power over it. One can thus govern the outcome of a future act or cause a past act to happen again.

The *ōshime* is felled down through the dance called *kuri-oroshi*. The four dancers pray for the safety of the village after the whole night's offerings brought to the *kami*. The dance narrates

the deities' return to their permanent abode.

Ōshime is then disassembled and scattered on the stage which served for the sacred dances. The brushwood is to represent the mountain where hunters are going to come and make a mock hunt of a wild boar. *Shishi-togiri* is a vestige of the art of *kyōgen*.²² Two fake hunters masked as old people – Seko and Mabushi – start for the “mountain”. They pretend hunting a wild boar, while now and again they converse with the so-called “hunting referee” whose role is played by a high priest. Both the dialogue and the hunters' gestures are extremely funny and the spectators amuse themselves throughout the dance in the improvised mountain. The presence of such a dance pertains to the traditional beliefs and practices that embody the spirituality of hunters' community, while the last rite takes place in the kitchen and shows the importance of the wild boar in the life of mountain people. The whole ritual closes with a communion between deities and people, as the latter are offered rice porridge mixed with pieces of boiled wild boar meat, after the same offer had been made to *kami*.

Shiromi-kagura can be considered one of the most representative Japanese complex observances. It tells us about the harmony between belief, art and rites of initiation. It is a ritual practice of divine origin in which dance links the past and the present, being a showing of the sacred through human beings and human art.

Conclusion

Performances have occurred among all the world's peoples from the dawn of human cultures. Dancing, singing, wearing masks and costumes, acting stories, retelling the hunt, etc. are all coexistent with the human condition. Most likely, such performances have functioned everywhere as both ritual and entertainment.

While ritual emphasizes efficacy – getting something done (e.g. a god propitiated), entertainment emphasizes the pleasurable and aesthetic qualities of a performance. Efficacy and entertainment are not opposites, but rather complementary. Ritual performances tend toward the efficacy end, and aesthetic performances tend toward the entertainment end. But all ritual performances have some aesthetic qualities, and all aesthetic performances have some ritual qualities.

Kagura can be considered a ritual act on several levels. In one sense, it is held to be a gift, performed by *miko*, priests or *tayū* as an offering to please the *kami*. In another sense, *kagura* is believed to be a means of divine communication by which a *kami* imparts its essence. On yet another level, *kagura* is transcendental, in that aesthetic fulfillment has spiritual significance. Both humans and *kami* dance, seeking to achieve greater spiritual power through artistic performance. *Kagura* represents thus the symbolic harmony between man and *kami*. Moreover, those who watch “live” the ritual together with those who perform it, which means that, at the place of the festival, the profane time becomes sacred.

If I am to borrow Eliade's words, *kagura* “can speak to man”. And because it “speaks” about itself, first of all about its origin, about the primordial event it owes its existence to, *kagura*

²² *Kyōgen* is a farce played during a Noh play.

becomes real and significant. On the other hand, though based on mythological models or ancient beliefs in most of its parts, *kagura* has been subjected to creativity. It has kept opening new perspectives to man's resourceful spirit, being at the same time a distinctive mark of Japan's cultural identity.

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Neo-Hindu Movements and Gender Issues

Simona Galațchi

Critical gender analysis has become an important part of contemporary study of religion. New Religious Movements (henceforth: NRMs) open challenging debates from this point of view, as they try to adapt their discourses to the changes in the consciousness and in the social life of our present times. Most of the Asian NRMs try to promote methods of “global” transformation, assuming the philosophy that all humanity is one and framing themselves as supra-religions. In order to “conquer” the Western societies, they transcend the mainstream religions and avoid their narrow and limiting concepts, including gender issues on their agenda. Even if they do not succeed in operating significant changes of gender roles, they do try to implement certain innovations and modifications. Their spiritual leaders get acquainted with the gender issues, with the feminist ideas too and, consequently, bring them into attention and sometimes assert their own point of view on the matter¹. Among Asian NRMs, those religious movements that offer members a theology rooted in Hinduism (the Neo-Hindu Movements) co-exist with a plethora of books and articles about the feminine principle in Hinduism. Along with the doctrine, the followers of these religious movements get a comprehensive cultural system of rituals, daily routines, eating habits, dress styles² and patterns of relationship, that speak of **the lives of actual women in neo-Hindu contexts**. And this is the point that warrants our attention. Although most of the neo-Hindu movements are grounded on a profoundly patriarchal society and reiterate traditional values that perpetuate androcracy, some of them – as Osho’s movement³, Brahma Kumaris⁴ or Shri Mataji’s Sahaja Yoga⁵, for example – rise a significant interest for the gender perspective they trigger⁶.

¹ Osho and Shri Mataji (two of the leaders of neo-Hindu movements that sometimes attack each other in their public discourses) comment upon the misogyny of the main religious systems. Both of them disagree with the aggressiveness and masculine characteristics that may result in women due to the feminist movement. Osho says: “The feminist movement will create more and more masculine women. They will be more and more aggressive and for them the abandonment path becomes unsuitable.”

² See my study on clothing in neo-Hindu movements in *The Body in New Religious Movements of Indian Origin*, published in “The Annals of the Sergiu Al-Gheorghe Institute”, Volumes IX-XI/ 2000-2002, pp. 129-130.

³ For further readings see: Osho – *The Book of Women*, Zurich: Osho International Foundation, 1997; <http://www.osho.com>, <http://osho.org/homepage.html>, <http://www.oshoworld.com>, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/rajneesh.htm>.

⁴ The links for further readings are: <http://www.bkwsu.com>, <http://www.rajayoga.com>.

⁵ For further readings see: <http://www.sahajayoga.org>, <http://www.sahajavidya.org>, <http://www.sol.com.au/kor>.

⁶ See Elizabeth Puttick, “Women in New Religious Movements”, in Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (eds.), *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, London and New York, Routledge, 2005 or in Lorne L. Dawson (ed.), *Cults and New Religious Movements. A Reader*, Blackwell Publishing, 2003. The research offers a comprehensive image of the social role of women in NRMs, following the main targets of gender analysis: *Gender roles in NRMs*, *Women in power in the Osho movement*, *Discipleship: the path of feminine spirituality?*, *Sexual abuse: the shadow side of the master-disciple relationship*, *Sexuality and marriage in NRMs*, *Motherhood and community: beyond the nuclear family*, *Female spiritual leadership in NRMs*, *A new typology of spiritual needs and values*.

The basic questions that require to receive an answer in order to establish the genderized dimension of neo-Hindu movements are⁷:

I. About the women's role and status in these NRMs:

I.1. - *What is their participation in ritual and liturgy?*

A real revolution in the field is triggered by those NRMs that have a woman leader. In Sahaja Yoga movement for example, women are often entitled to conduct collective meditations or perform Vedic rituals as *puja* or *havan* (i.e worship ceremonies with water – for *puja*, and fire – for *havan*). Moreover, during the *pujas* performed in the physical presence of Shri Mataji, mainly women are privileged to participate to the adornment of the deity for which the (stage) ceremony is dedicated to. There is no specific mentioning regarding the prohibition from full participation in public sphere religious activities in the menstruating periods (as it happens in Hinduism and in all main religions of the world as well, where women during these periods are viewed as polluted). On the contrary, this woman spiritual leader emphasize strongly on the fact that nobody should feel guilty for any reason whatsoever, because – in her vision – guilty consciousness acts against human beings and represents a sin. This perspective intends to cut the strings that bound women to a lower status, due to the punishment “they deserved for their sinful nature” as we know it was patterned by religion.

I.2. - *What religious authority do women hold?*

- They are regarded as *shaktis*, as dynamic powers, who can work efficiently to instate religious principles in the world.

- They become resources of energy, of spirituality.

I.3. - *What access are they given to priesthood, monasticism or religious leadership?*

- This is the case of women occupying powerful leader positions within the Brahma Kumaris, Osho and Sahaja Yoga movements. In her article *The Brahma Kumaris and the Role of Women*⁸, Vieda Skultans states that, undoubtedly, [Brahma Kumaris] is “a movement where women control men. Women occupy positions of power and status, whereas men (...) are subordinate to women.” Under certain aspects, we are dealing with a complete role reversal. Although Skultans does not explicitly term it a feminist movement, her study makes it clear that we may talk about an implicit feminist ideology.

Similarly, Osho's movement shows a majority of women in leadership and administrative roles: women held 80 per cent of the highest positions (at a given moment).

As a leader of the Sahaja Yoga movement, Shri Mataji encourages women emancipation, both socially and politically⁹, and, within her movement, she appoints about one third of the leadership positions to women. Her sermons and her behavior towards her own disciples do stress out the great significance of the spiritual mother's role, as she often refers the re-defining of a *guru*'s qualities from a maternal point of view. (*Guru* is traditionally valorized by the Indian culture from an exclusively masculine point of view).

⁷ I have structured my article (the answers to the gender questions) having in mind the types of women's experience and their content, following which are the consequences they have in NRMs' contexts.

⁸ This article is published by Elizabeth Puttick and Peter Clarke (eds.), *Women as Teachers and Disciples in Traditional and New Religions*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1993.

⁹ At the advice of her *guru*, one of the closest female disciples Shri Mataji had in the '90s, known as Al-Ganesh, tried (as an independent) to win a seat in the Italian Parliament in the elections of 1994.

- Discipleship used to be reserved mainly to men (and to those women only who chose to become nuns), but now it is accessible to women too. Moreover, once they are initiated in the respective doctrines, women also attain a status equivalent to priesthood (they become *gurus* as well, even though not quite “full-size” *gurus*, since they are to subordinate to their spiritual leader/*guru*), which most religions limit the access to or even forbid. Followers of Osho’s movement, Brahma Kumaris and Shri Mataji believe that the future will belong to a feminine era that will positively valorize the feminine dimension of spirituality.

I.4. - *What kind of religious communities and rites of their own have women created?*

- All kinds of organized forms of solidarity inside these groups are strongly encouraged, and women benefit from strong sisterhood networks.

- Actions favoring collective interest above personal interest are given preponderance.

II. How are women represented in religious language and thought:

II.1. - *What do neo-Hindu movements teach about women?*

• In connection with women experiences (i.e. gravidity, giving birth, woman and children, breast / own body feeding, menses):

- Most religions sanctify motherhood as woman’s destiny and consider it her really greatest accomplishment, her true vocation. The conservative religious groups that follow the traditional family structures (such as Sathya Sai Baba’s movement or Sahaja Yoga or ISKCON movements) glorify the women’s capacity of procreation and state as the main purpose of the family the giving-birth to children. As a consequence, the *gurus* and the communities they instituted lead a policy in favour of natality, enforcing pregnancy – through the means of discourses and ideology. The access to contraceptives or to family planning is being obscured in such cases and forbidden to get debated upon freely and in public.

- Osho’s movement is the most militant organisation against the family institution, but also the most liberal one as regards sexual practices. It **discourages** children bearing and birth for the following reasons: (a) most people are incapable of positive parenting and (b) children are a distraction from the spiritual growth that is the main purpose of life and of adhering to the movement. Nevertheless, women with children are committed to “giving birth to themselves as seekers of truth” and they are accepted in the community who thus gives them the opportunity to harmonize professional life, married life and pregnancy with spiritual evolution (development).

- The groups preaching celibacy, the so-called *brahmacharya state* adepts (such as Brahma Kumaris or ISKCON members), impose on the control of women’s sexuality and fertility as main prerequisites of success.

- Shri Mataji’s participation at the Beijing Conference¹⁰ (a landmark in contemporary feminist movement), in 1995, highlights her awareness that patriarchal ways have to be demolished. Thus she states that, in future, the history of humanity is going to be written in a

¹⁰ The leader of the Sahaja Yoga movement addressed a speech on the global problems facing women today at the Inter-regional Round Table Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 13, 1995. It is one of the first participation of this kind expressing concern for women’s problems at such an important feminist event. For the complete text of Shri Mataji’s (Nirmala Srivastava) discourse on this occasion visit: <http://www.sahajayoga.org/quotesandtalks/default.asp>.

different manner: taking into consideration women's role and importance. After presenting a comparative analysis of the Eastern and Western women's condition, Shri Mataji points out that "women are the potential power of every civilisation and every country". Their mentioning in the world's history should start with the acknowledgement that women are the creators and the preservers of the entire humankind. Such aspects were related to the divine, implacable, metaphysical role that women play: "This is the role that the Almighty God has assigned to women. Seeds cannot create anything by themselves. It is the Mother Earth, which provides the flowers and the fruits and other bounties. Similarly, it is the woman who creates the child, who nurtures the baby and eventually brings up the citizens of tomorrow. Women must therefore rank with Mother Earth as the edifice of the entire humanity." Therefore, this approach that brings women closer to nature does not lead to the idea of women's inferior status, as cultural history has done so far. It is meant to highlight women's creative potential, essentially from the moral, cultural point of view; this role is thus not reduced to a reproductive one. According to Shri Mataji's vision, the attitude towards women accounts for the spirituality standards of a society, for the level of culture and for the development of that world (at a particular moment in time): "Unfortunately, men have utilised muscle power to gain a dominating position over women. They have not recognised that women are complementary and equal, but not similar partners in human endeavours. A society that does recognize this fundamental truth and does not give to women their rightful role is not a civilized society." We can hereby spot the well-known idea of the Second Wave's Feminism that speaks about the equality between men and women under in the context of structural differences. Similarly, Shri Mataji continues her discourse and refers the women's full right of participation as men's equal partners to any field of activity, be it social, cultural, educational, political, economical, administrative or any other field. And (unlike the other leaders of neo-Hindu movements do) she is far from maintaining motherhood (children birth and education / "pro-creator and preserver of children"), housewife role or sisterhood role as unique roles for women in the society. Shri Mataji insists on the necessity of rising awareness on the gender roles' issue and highlights the importance of defining women and men's roles: man is assigned practical, technical, material progress and maintenance roles ("men are responsible for the politics and economics of the country"), and woman is assigned a social, cultural role ("women are responsible for the society"). In order to underline the importance of maintaining the gender roles' limits independent of the position they hold, Shri Mataji encourages women that are in a position of playing a "masculine" role (i.e. when they are in leadership positions) to avoid assimilating men's strategies and mentalities, but to manifest their own feminine specificity: "It is very important that they should not forget that they are women who have to manifest deep motherly concern and love." From a power perspective, the preservation of the feminine qualities is rated as very important: "We need women as equal but not similar partners with men, but with a subtle understanding of the nature of men and how to bring them into the centre with inner balance. We need balanced women in order to have a balanced human race with peace within itself." The true feminine power consists in the comprehension of the man's nature for the purpose of reaching a good balance and harmony (argue/ fight is futile from this point of view).

On the one hand, women have a divine role in the creation of the world. On the other, they are the (*sine qua non*) prerequisite of the existence of the divine in the proximity of people:

“Where the women are respected and respectable, there reside the Gods of our well-being.” (Sanskrit proverb). The position of the woman and the general attitude towards her speak about the existence of an awareness regarding personal value that becomes utterly important through relating it with the divine. And not only that: “Unless and until you bring a new culture by which women (...) can rise in their own esteem and express themselves in such a way that they create high moral standards for their society, women neither in the East, nor in the West will rise to their full stature of feminine speciality.” In conclusion, Shri Mataji’s view on women’s emancipation is based upon the achievement of one’s own self-awareness. It starts from this point. Morality can be achieved by knowing one’s own values, both as a woman and as a man. “All the fundamentalists who talk of religion expect women to be absolutely moral and the men can do whatever they like. I feel we have to educate men more than women.” Morality is defined by the leader of Sahaja Yoga movement, based on sex and virtues (men have to observe the same fidelity/chastity duties as women). Shri Mataji also condemns those cultures that “relegate women to the level of an inferior human being, fit to be dominated by men and children”. Thus we get to the situation where mothers are not respected and children do not obey, nor listen to mothers, so that the result manifests a deep imbalance of the basis of the entire society.

II.2. - Do these NRMs project empowering or debilitating images, emphasizing equality and partnership or subordination?

- In connection with feminine experiences (i.e. children’s/ husband / elderly care, in terms of feeding and cleaning, domestic management, rape, pornography, sexual harassment):

- As for those NRMs where gender roles are clearly defined, there is the benefit of stable families, but managing the domestic issues and nursing the family members remain women’s responsibilities. (In these cases, traditional private life roles are maintained while being ruled by religious ideology and simultaneously required by the *guru* and by the newly created community.) In Western societies, where such movements could establish themselves, these traditional patterns of gender roles may perpetuate among their female adepts the double-working day and, consequently, the double psychological and physical exhaustion as well as the unremunerated domestic work. However, the commune – as it is constituted inside these movements – is widely endorsed as a form of social organisation entailing many of the benefits of the extended family such as childcare (but also hospitals and asylums – various forms of support – for old and sick people). This way, they give women the opportunity to be mothers without sacrificing their own development. At this point, we may notice a *stimulating involvement of the community in the process of child raising, and attempts of involving and charging men with the work of childcare* as well.

- The sexual abuses of male spiritual leaders represent the dark side of the master-disciple relationship within the general patriarchal context of power abuse. (Many *gurus* have been accused of sexual abuse, including Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the leader of Transcendental Meditation, Osho, Sathya Sai Baba.) The women involved were not always passive victims, but they struggled a lot to seduce their *guru*, as in most cases they were in love with them. Such situations are basically the result of harem-style structures where women have no access to power and high status unless they are the master’s lovers and therefore they are encouraged to compete for his favours. They are promised, in return, special teachings, the disclosure of high initiatic secrets, promises which may remain illusory and unfulfilled. A possible explanation for

the reasons why women followers of these movements are driven into becoming victims of sexual abuses is precisely the lack of fatherly love in their childhood, the lack of a responsible moral father caress, since the only male caress they have ever known is the sexual one.

- In connection with anonymity experiences:

- All these neo-Hindu movements reiterate the great importance given to the spiritual leader in the process of history-making. The disciples are given – from a historical perspective – a secondary collectively-anonymous value: disciples are the basis for a world-wide transformation on the premises of their own self-improvement, since it is the “chosen/saved ones” who will change the face of the future world. Although, under such circumstances, disciples have value as individuals, at the same time they are taken globally, as an amorphous mass that is meant to reflect in each of its particles *the empowering image of the cult's leader* (the only one that actually does matter).

- Redefining body and offering access to spirituality by its means¹¹, these neo-Hindu movements transgress the boundaries of race, caste and gender and encourage open-minded approach and comprehension for diversity, for equality (of chances – in the realm of spirituality) in the context of difference and within the frame of the homogenizing tendency of the respective groups from the social cohesion point of view.

- Under the aspect of the woman's relation with man in marital circumstances, Shri Mataji suggests that roles must be clearly separated and assumed, yet without – as feminists assert – any hierarchy between them: “Men should know all men-like things and women should know all woman-like things. Women and men can be equally intelligent. (If roles are reversed, imbalance pops in.) Doing something does not make you more or less valuable. (...) Man and woman are like the wheels of a car. If one dominates, if one becomes bigger than the other, the car will spin around itself. There should be no issue of domination in marriage, but there should be efforts for integration, for mutual understanding and perfect co-operation, this is what needs to penetrate both society and family.” (*Getting Prepared for Becoming*, Winchester, 17.05.1980)¹². As different as they are, man and woman can evolve spiritually if only they work together to this end.

In the sermon entitled *Mother Earth* (Surbiton, 21.08.1983), Shri Mataji recommends women to follow their own path, in an attempt to take them out of the male models of servitude: “We must assume our (feminine) nature with full dignity and with full right. There is no need for women to do all the things that men had already done. (...) Everything is prepared now for the feminine nature to rise”.

When stating that man-woman equality does not mean adopting each and every masculine norm (“If you like to talk in contradictory, if you are rational, if you like to talk like a man, than you have a masculine development. Feminine development does not mean equality with men's stupidity”), Shri Mataji contests the Feminism of the First Wave that used to promote Simone de Beauvoir's idea that “in order to be man's equal, woman should become a man”. Women should not make use of men's weapons because they take the risk to loose the battle: “When women

¹¹ See also the already mentioned research on *The Body in New Religious Movements of Indian Origin*, in “The Annals of the Sergiu Al-George Institute”, Volumes IX-XI/ 2000-2002, pp. 121-134.

¹² The quotes from Shri Mataji's sermons are to be found in “Divine Cool Breeze” magazine collection, 1978-2006.

become arrogant and very aggressive, men win them over.” (*Heart at Sahasrara*, Delhi, 09.02.1981)

In the process of spiritual evolution, seen as an uplifting spiral, and not as a pendulum movement, femininity is allowed a decisive role. “In order to be able to follow the spiral-like motion, we need to use the power embodied in women’s feminine qualities. But where are those women gifted with femininity? They dress up like women; they try to be feminine and that is all. But this should not be the way. They should be feminine from inside. Christ proved in his life that he had a feminine heart: he forgave. Only a woman can forgive; man cannot because he is aggressive. How can he forgive? Krishna did not ever forgive anyone. He killed. That was his royal fashion. Christ forgave to such an extent as to show that he had added a new loop to the spiral, to show that humans need to develop a new feminine quality. This does not mean that you start to walk like women or to bring out your waist line. *You need to be maternal* and not paternal. Your behaviour towards others should have that gentleness, that kindness that is specific to maternal behaviour.” (*Mother Earth*, Surbiton, 21.08.1983)

When talking about women and drawing guidelines related to the behaviour and attitude towards them in Sahaja Yoga movement, Shri Mataji takes out of the anonymity – on the practical level – what women do and reevaluate their social and spiritual importance. This woman-*guru* thus succeeds – within her own religious group – in eliminating the women mistrust, the suspicion concerning their social and spiritual company, and succeeds in establishing an honest cultural and social partnership between sexes, since this is a possible and desirable state to achieve. She also succeeds in eliminating women’s low self-esteem by providing them with a new identity profile. Shri Mataji encourages women to focus on themselves for self-transformation, self-reliability within an ideal of human perfection. For this purpose, she brings the idea that one cannot justify herself/himself in front of God for her/his own spiritual failure; one cannot blame parents, family, children or husband for being unable to achieve the true purpose of one’s life (that is a state of a higher spirituality). The main moral resulting from this discourse perspective and asserted by Shri Mataji is one that belongs to a gynocentric ethics. In this light, all patriarchal “values” based on self-sacrifice do “faint”. Shri Mataji’s lectures stress out the importance of everything that may lead to women’s *empowerment*, so that they do not depend on men. Sahaja Yoga’s leader condemns the women’s practice of attracting and maintaining a man for the protection purposes. She considers this practice a cause for deep feelings of insecurity and disrespect towards one’s own body (mutilated for the sake of complying with a certain fashion model or cinema stars): “The insecurity between men and women comes out from the fact that they need to feel attracted to each other, to be uncivil to each other in order to feel attracted.” (*Getting Prepared for Becoming*, Winchester, 17.05.1980)

As far as marriage is concerned, Shri Mataji fairly ranges among radical feminists. In the same line with them, she militates for an institution of honest and balanced relationships inside the family, being convinced that this will definitely go beyond the limits of the religious group and have an impact on the overall social outer life, too. Shri Mataji wishes to build healthy families that give joy, based on love relationships where husband and wife support each other and are not interested in domination strategies (i.e. power relations). Marriages should be meant to have a positive impact on society: “Marriages that are not useful to society have no meaning at

all, they are just a waste.” (*idem*), says Shri Mataji while having in mind – just like Carol Gilligan¹³ – an extended vision over the world that supposes care for as many persons as possible.

II.3. - Are feminine images and symbols used in relation to the transcendent?

- Taken globally, such religious communities get “feminized”, in the sense that both women and men are encouraged to develop and adopt feminine qualities (it is such qualities that are considered adequate and propitious to spiritual development) that they should manifest through *bhakti* (devotion, love and worship of God in the heart – taking the *guru* as an intermediary), and they are encouraged to show complete obedience towards their master/teacher/*guru* (both on a spiritual level, and on a material level).

- Models, either women or goddesses, as the ones Shri Mataji refers to, represent – as a copy – the image of the spiritual leader.

III. What are women’s own religious experiences (how women themselves speak about their religious life in the context of these newly adopted religious constructs).

In “Știri Sahaja” (*Sahaja News* – Romanian edition), No. 18/ October 2003, Doina Mira Dascălu recounts about one of her journeys in which she met her *guru*. She was one of the four Romanian ladies appointed to be in charge with Shri Mataji’s visit in Paris, as the movement’s leader herself asked for. Although coming from different parts of the country and unknown to each other before, these ladies confess sisterhood: “From the moment we all four met, a subtle extremely strong *bond*¹⁴ started to work in between us: *a bond of love*, of *protection* and of *mutual support*. We were four parts of a single body and any time we were encountering difficulties of any kind, we were all there to help each other at once. During this special period of time, we all had a permanent and intense *communication* with many common *intuitions*. The daily happenings were bringing the signs of the Divine that we were decoding, according to our own personalities. After *communicating* and confronting our individual understanding, we were able to build an overall image, meant to make us open our eyes regarding the meaning of the subtle work of the Divine.”

The narration taken here as an illustration for a personal experience in the frame of an Asian NRM is relevant as an evidence of gender issue awareness of the movement’s female leader and her women disciples. “A very important fact – understood and clearly *felt* all the time by me – was that Shri Mataji («Mother») wanted «to work out» world women’s problems. Her attention on this aspect was revealed to us in the previous meetings (that we had at *Guru Puja*), where we were presented a documentary about the horrible situation of many women from India who are at the periphery of the society and where we were acquainted with the ongoing projects aimed at supporting women, as it is the case of that Center for Care and Rehabilitation settled with compassion at Mother’s wish.” It is well known that it is a common practice among the (new) religious movements to build and run philanthropic institutions, such as those mentioned above, hospitals or environmental projects such as ecologically sensitive farms. But the Romanian disciple of Shri Mataji finds a deeper significance of the action that rises above the

¹³ I refer to the *ethic of care* Carol Gilligan talked of in her book *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), an important contribution to the development of the feminist theories.

¹⁴ My underlines are meant to point to a use of language that is characteristic to feminine speech.

level of help and solving problems for the women in need. In Doina Dascălu's opinion, her spiritual leader brings these problems into the collective attention and talks about these projects, because actually she aims somewhere else: "The message addressed to all the sahaja yogis was not intended only to sensitize and to draw our attention with appeal to our compassion, but also, and particularly, to realize what should be the attitude towards women and to determine us all to change it even inside our Sahaja Yoga group." And the argument she brings to strengthen her conviction is: "We were four women aged between 40 and 50, with many common features, but being – at the same time – different enough, brought together by Mother; each of us had and was still having a hard and complex life, with many difficult experiences before conversion to Sahaja Yoga and after this moment as well." Moreover, there was another Indian lady, around 55 years old and widow, and – in connection with her, as the Romanian lady recollects – Shri Mataji explained that (in India) such women that lost the protection of the husband find themselves in the position that neither family, nor the society respects them. Doina Mira Dascălu feels herself pointed out: "It was exactly our case! All four of us were single at that moment, so we were lacking the protection of a husband. This situation's consequences were felt by us in many circumstances due to a large variety of behaviors we had to confront to outside the Sahaja Yoga group, but inside it also. And I mainly refer to domineering or aggressive attitudes, to lack of respect or common-sense etc. We all felt intensely (in our subtle understanding) that Mother wanted to change something in the attitude towards women. Also she wanted to «work» on the ways women can get the respect of others, developing and using their subtle qualities." (The last statement speaks about the subtle energetic work that – it is assumed – the spiritual leader is doing in order to change the world and also relate to the women qualities and respect they deserve according to the teachings woman disciple follows.)

Another significant event Doina Mira Dascălu mentions in her story is the retreat of the male leadership of France in favour of the ex-leader's wife. As he was having an Islamic background, his reaction was relevant for the degree of transformation he has undergone through his conversion to this particular religious movement. Although he was coming from an environment renowned for its women's oppression, the ex-leader accepted his *guru's* decision "gently and innocently", praising women's role and qualities.

Conclusions:

The groups belonging to the category of neo-Hindu movements promote basically strong patriarchal structures with conservative gender norms (as those of the world they come from), norms that are better structured than the already existent ones in the outside Western society (the case of ISKCON movement and Sathya Sai Baba's movement). Still, there are some of these movements that may be considered remarkable in the way they bring to the fore interesting and innovating aspects of gender concern. The study – far from having exhaustive intentions – is focussed particularly on underlining certain positive gender orientations of these Asian NRMs, that were not observed so far. The numerous ways in which women's spirituality express itself in these NRMs (women's role and status, their representations and their own religious experiences) reveal – in some cases – a paradigm shift that opens perspectives for further investigations.

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Kurds' Perception of their Enemy in the 20th Century

Adriana Tămășan

Approaching the subject of Kurdish identity, considered by Joyce Blau¹ one of the most difficult themes regarding the Kurdish problem, my aim is to explore it from a new perspective, that of the perception of the enemy. Therefore, focusing on the literature of the XXth Century, mainly on the literature produced by the Kurdish national movement and, using the text analysis method, we will try to illustrate the symbols and values that prevail the common Kurdish identity and to determine their ideological and social function.

In the Kurdish historiography, the identity did not represented one of the main interests untill recent time, at the same time with the developement of the western studies on this field of research.

The Kurdish studies became a separate field of research in the first three decades of the XXth Century, especially due to English, French and Soviet academic initiatives. This orientation can be explained by the fact that these states, after the split of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the XXth Century, approached the Middle East as mandatory states or as detainers of Kurdish territories and, of course, of the Kurdish people. In spite of some major studies that came from these areas between 1900 and 1930, the 40's and 60's brought a decline in the Kurds' political status, in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, a lapse that was also felt in the field of Kurdish historiography.²

As a result of the political development of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, in the seventh decade of the 20th Century, one particular phenomenon can be observed: the progressive revival of the Kurdish studies field, which will culminate in the 90's through the development of the Kurdish literature and historiography³, notably in the states with large Kurdish communities like The Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and France. The Barzani rebellion in Iraq (1961-1975), the Guerrilla warfare in Iran (1979-1980) and in Turkey (1984-1999), the two Gulf Wars (1980-1988, 1991) and the establishment of a *Safe Haven* in Iraqi Kurdistan (1991) put the Kurdish issue once again on the regional and international agenda.⁴ This research direction intensified especially since the Gulf War in the aftermath of which hundreds and thousands of Kurds fled from Iraq into Iran and Turkey.

¹ Joyce Blau is a linguist, specialised in Kurdish language and literature, professor of Kurdish language, literature and civilization at *Institute National de Langues et Civilisations Orientales*(INALCO), France, memeber of the research team *Monde Iranien* at Conseil Nationale de Recherche Scientifique(CNRS), chief reader of the journal *Études Kurdes*.

² Bozarslan 2000, p. 1.

³ Bozarslan 2000, p. 1.

⁴ van Bruinessen 1992, pp. 38-45.

Currently, the main feature of the Kurdish historiography is represented by a general direction in the political history of the Kurds, focused especially on the XXth Century, a time in which the Kurdish nationalism and national awareness were born, which explains the special interest for the political events of this period.

This feature reflects the Western perception of the Kurds, focusing on their struggle to preserve their identity, but ignoring the Kurdish culture. Therefore, we have a limited number of works dedicated to Kurdish culture and identity. The reason for the lack of this kind of studies is not the poverty of Kurdish culture, but the fact that the Kurds never had an independent country. This is also the reason for the late occurrence of their written literature, at the beginning of the 20th Century, in the context of Kurdish national movement. Another factor of the lack of interest for the Kurdish culture, is the focus of the firsts Western researchers on Orientalistics on the high culture and on the imperial history of this geographical area.⁵ Applying a standard interpretation on it, they ignored the cultural behaviour based on popular and oral forms and traditions. Also, because the Kurdish society did not promoted high forms of literature, the researchers were more attracted to Arab or Persian culture and identity.

As a result of the Kurdish institutes activities in Europe, notably of the Kurdish Institute in Paris, a number of studies focused on the Kurdish culture and identity began to be published. The first work in this sense is that of Philipe Kreyenbroek⁶ and Christine Allison⁷, *Kurdish Culture and Identity* (1992), as a compilation of studies produced by a large number of specialists in Kurdish studies. The themes approached are varying, beginning with the development of Kurdish literature in the 20th Century, to the religious system and the material culture of the Kurds.

More recently, in 2003, Clémece Scalbert⁸, completed *Kurdish Culture and Identity* with a study regarding the Kurdish painting, a subject that was considered along with the Kurdish music the main shortcomings of this work. The study *Exile et diaspora: le processus de création chez six peintres Kurdes en Europe (Exile and Diaspora: the creation process at six Kurdish painters from Europe)*, is a reflection on the Kurdish artistic plurality and an interrogation of those representations and values that are Kurdish territory representations and values in the exile communities of Kurds.

Martin van Bruinessen⁹ is another specialist who focused his researches on the Kurdish identity. In the 80's and the 90's he has published a number of studies on this subject, compiled in one single book, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Kurdish Building States*. He highlights that in the context of Kurdish social divisions and the development of an ethnic common conscience there have been created some *narrow identities* or *overlapped identities* around elements like the language, the geographical region and religion.

⁵ Kreyenbroek, Allison 1996, pp. 1-3.

⁶ Philipe Kreyenbroek is a specialist in Persian languages and religions at the University of London, founder of the Persian Oral Studies Society

⁷ Christine Allison is a specialist in Kurdish language and oral literature, professor at INALCO.

⁸ Clémence Scalbert is the author of a number of studies on the Kurdish problem.

⁹ Martin van Bruinessen is an anthropologist, professor of Kurdish studies at the University of Utrecht.

As one of the inerent themes of the Kurdish identitary speech, the image of the enemy, which will be analysed in this study, is comprising cyclical elements of the Kurdish common mentality. This proves the perfect concordance of the enemy perception with the developement of the historical events.

In the poem *Mem û Zin (Mem and Zin)*, written in the 16th Century, during the confrontations between the Persians and the Ottomans for the control over the Kurdish territory, in the context of one of the first definition of the concept of Kurdish state and the assertion of the necessity of the Kurdish independence, the author Ehmede Khani sees these two elements as *sine qua non* conditions of the Kurdish emancipation but also of the annihilation of the enemies. Thus, the author makes a clear identification of the enemies in that period and of the opponent attitude of the Kurds towards their own exploitation by the two empires.

If we had a king
.....
These Rumis(Turks) would not defeat us
We would not become ruins in the hand of Owls
We would not become doomed, homeless
*Defeated by the turks*¹⁰
These Rumis and Ajams(Turks and Persians)
.....
Both sides have made the Kurdish people
*A target for the fate's arrows*¹¹

Despite the three centuries gap, while the Kurdish literature was not very prosperous¹², at the beginning of the 19th Century, the theme of the Turkish exploitation and oppression returned at the same time with the Kurdish litterary writings, mostly publicistic in that period. One of the most eloquent examples is the first Kurdish journal *Kurdistan*, published in 1898 in Cairo, where the image of the Turks/Ottomans as enemies appears as a speech which emphasizes the repressive character of sultan's Abdulhamid reign and the entire state apparatus.

Because of the criticism passed on this political regime and even on Abdulhamid himself, the chief editor of the journal, Miqdad Midhet Bedirkhan¹³, will have been expelled from Egypt at the Sultan's request. On the return to Istanbul, he attempted to publish the journal again but his efforts were defeated again by the Ottoman authorities. Bedirkhan's brother wrote about this:

*My brother was the one who made possible the publication of this journal, but the emperor (Abdulhamid) did not let him to reside in Egipt. He returned to Istanbul, where the publication of his journal was again forbbiden.*¹⁴

¹⁰ Ehmede Khani 1962, p. 32.

¹¹ Ehmede Khani 1962, p. 33.

¹² See more about Kurdish litterature, Blau 1996, pp.20-29.

¹³ The Bedirkhan is a noble Kurdish family that gave many personalities to the Kurdish national movement.

¹⁴ *Kurdistan* 1898, p. 2.

The 1923 division produces a radicalization of the speech on the enemy, whose image, now a plural one, gets more and more outlined and precise. Even though the shapes, symbols and personifications of these enemies vary from one individual to another, from one social or political group to another, there can be identified the same negative characters.

The image of the conqueror Turks in the 16th Century is now replaced by a country that denies their existence, and that of the Persians by a repressive Iran. Iraq and the Great Powers of the West represent the new elements of the discourse on the enemy, in the context of the division of the Kurds and the setting up of a national movement at the beginning of the 20th Century. This variation of aspects regarding the enemy's portrait is actually the reflection of the group's personal experiences and aspirations.

We have on one side the official discourse, reflected in political documents and in the press, which offers us a general, less politicized view on the enemy. We can distinguish within this discourse two tendencies. On one hand there is a neutral one, characteristic of the nationalist, intellectual classes in the West, whose representative is Kamuran Bedir Khan and implicitly the magazine published in Paris in 1948, *Bulletin du Centre d'Études Kurdes*. On the other hand, most of the Kurdish political groups adopted the Marxist ideology in the 20th Century, leading therefore to outlining some specific characteristics of a left-hand discourse. This tendency appeared at the beginning of the 1930's altogether with parties like PDK and PDKI, in Iraq and respectively Iran and also the Kurdish movement in Turkey in the 1960's. Even though the portrait of the enemy coincides in the two discursive tendencies, in terms of approaches and themes, as we will see, the marxist view is more aggressive, like the propanganda specific to radical movements.

One of the general-valid elements, specific to this official discourse is the focus on the role played by the Great Powers in the division of Kurdistan. They are considered to be the main artisans of the Kurdish situation, emphasizing the abusive interference in deciding the destiny of the Kurds and of other nations at the end of WWI.

The Great Powers, which by their politics ruined a lot of countries before and after the kurds will not rest insensibles in front of the evidences of their own injustices. This is because the term of international justice did not penetrate yet the civilization.

But I believe that when the civilized nations will better know the manifestations and the possibilities of a people, they will not be able to stay unresponsive to his greatness.

My dear Emir, I believe that this new journal that you are opening in the heart of the civilized world, to accomplish succesfully the mission of knowing your people.¹⁵

The Kurds accuse them of injustice, opportunism, own economic and strategic interests pre-eminence, hypocrisy in the practice of foreign policy and last, but not least, breaking the promises of applying the Wilsonian principles of the right to self-determination and independence of any people. The call to the democratic values, such as the right of any people to self-government and respect of the human rights are not in the Kurdish view but a part of the demagogic discourse employed by the West. Here is what it is affirmed in a memorandum of the Rizgary Party (The Iranian Kurdistan), addressed to the UN, in 1946:

¹⁵ *Lettre de Mansour Chalitta...* 1948, p. 1.

The Kurdish people like other persecuted races, laid great hopes on the principles of the Atlantic Charter, Yalta, Tehran, and Potsdam Declarations, as well as on the statements made by the United Nations leaders concerning the granting of freedom and independence, and the extermination of all kinds of persecution.

We had hoped that the Peace Conference and the UNO would be fairer in dealing with the Kurdish question than the unjust treaty of Lausanne and the decisions of the League of Nations, and no sooner was the second world ended and the victory of democratic principles announced, our hopes were dissipated and unprecedented acts of terror overwhelmed Kurdistan.¹⁶

Gradually, the negative image of the Great Powers is also associated with that of Turkey and Iraq. Therefore it is being outlined an Evil Axis founded by Great Britain, France, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. They are trying to justify the feeling of betrayal by the West, the breaking of the promises of liberation from the Ottoman domination. For this purpose there are being invoked diplomatic documents in order to demonstrate the discrepancy between the official discourse and its real diplomatic actions:

Unfortunately, the Mudros armistice (October, 30, 1918) was signed as a common declaration, November, 8, 1918. France and Great Britain were asserting that they do not have another aim except the "complete and final liberation of the peoples which for long time have been oppressed by the Turks and the creation of some governments and national administrations having as main source of the authority the right to discretion and to free-speech of the native people".

It was all about the implementation of the Wilsonian principles. It was something natural that the Kurds achieve their national independence. On the other side it can be noticed that the Great Britains' main aim was actually the separation of the south-east territory (the old vilayet of Mossul), from the rest of the Kurdistan in order to annex it against the general will of the Iraqi people, which were forming now the new national entity of Arab essence.¹⁷

The excerpt above hints especially at Great Britain's efforts, after WWI, to integrate the Mosul vilayet in Iraq and to benefit in this way of the oil resources in that area. The dispute over the Mosul vilayet between Great Britain and Turkey, (to which the above excerpt also refers to) begun towards the end of WWI represents the supreme and most often invoked proof to support this affirmation. According to the Kurdish opinion, the main concern of Great Britain on the eve of the Treaty of Sèvres was the assurance of the control on the oil resources of Kurdistan in order to give viability to the recently created Iraqi state, put under British mandate- in this way were guaranteed the communications towards the British Empire from India.¹⁸

We may still notice a double nature of the Kurdish attitude regarding the West. On the one hand, we can notice this accusation of the destiny of the Kurdish nation, for the indifference the way they dealt with the Kurdish situation after the First World War and for the lack of reaction and initiative which followed, in order to atone for their errors.

¹⁶ *Protest of Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Iraq...* 1982, p. 160.

¹⁷ *Où l'Irak joue...* 1948, pp. 13-14.

¹⁸ Emir Bedir Khan 1969, p. 2.

This indifference is associated in the Kurdish discourse with the expectations of the civilised world to take action in their advantage, as a reward for what they call *the failure of the Great Powers in the Kurdish situation*.¹⁹

*The liberal and comprehensive politic of Great Britain, the democratic traditions of the USA, the love for freedom of France, the USSR presence, which is supporting the national autonomy of the peoples at the Alies negotiations- are guarantees of a final solution to the Kurdish question through the creation of united, free and independent Kurdistan.*²⁰

Even though the tone is eulogistic in what concerns the four mentioned states, the remark referring to the USSR can be interpreted as an indicator of the left doctrinaire orientation. Therefore, the identification of the West with the *Imperialism* becomes a constant of the political parties' programme and of the Kurdish memoirs addressed to the UN throughout the 20th Century. In accordance with this conception, the states created after WWI, Turkey, Iraq and Syria do not represent but agents of the Imperialism, created precisely with the purpose to protect the imperialist interests in the Middle East.

*The Peace Treaties after the first world war and the subsequent treaties divided Kurdistan by force and without consulting the Kurds among the four states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, in order to safeguard the interests of imperialism and make them durable in the Middle East.*²¹

The discourse regarding the policy of Turkey, Iran and Iraq is actually more aggressive than the one regarding the West, better defined, especially in the documents of the marxist political groups. If the latter is considered responsible for the creation and also the indifference in dealing with the Kurdish situation, the three states are being outlined as supreme enemies of the Kurdish nation. All of the three states mentioned above are equally considered not only a kind of political threat but even a real danger regarding the cultural existence of the Kurds. The violation of the individual rights and the repressive measures of these states regarding the Kurdish minorities in their countries are frequently invoked in Kurdish diplomatic documents as a desperate and detailed explanation to the requests of intervention in the Kurdish situation of governments, European officials and international bodies:

*The Kurdish question is a flagrant deny of the international justice, is the subjection of a people by force. To break the Kurdish national resistance and to avoid the forced assimilation, the turkish, iraqi and iranian governments, by a concerted action are not giving up any arbitrary or abuse of power.*²²

In Turkey the Kurds are submitted to a particular law which, among other restrictions forbids them to speak their own language and to call themselves Kurds.

In Iran, any publishing in Kurdish is prohibited. And notwithstanding the fertility and the productiveness of the Kurdish territory, poverty, misery, sickness and ignorance predominate everywhere.

¹⁹ Emir Bedir Khan 1948, p. 1.

²⁰ The Kurdish League 1932, p. 3.

²¹ *Memorandum of the Kurdish Rizgari Party ...* 1982, p. 86.

²² *Texte de la lettre adressée le 29 novembre 1948 ...* 1948, p. 22.

*In Iraq, in spite of the existence of a legal status granting to the Kurdish districts, a limited administrative and cultural rights, in fact and in consequence of the policy adopted by the Government of Bagdad, these rights are reduced to nought and the Kurds are suffering all sort of right denials and illtreatments.*²³

The officials that are impementing *the anihilation politic of the state*²⁴ are the material image of an abstack enemy like the Iraqi, Turkish and Persian. Thus, depending on the governance alternance, the presidents of states are becoming enemies of the Kurdish people: Abdul Karim Kassem, Ahmed Hassn al-Bakr or Saddam Hussein in Irak, Musfafa Kemal in Turkey and Reza Şah Pahlavi²⁵ in Iran. The common feature of these state presidents is the constant implementation of coercion and oppression against the kurds.

The deprivation of rights is not the only offense committed against the Kurds, according to their own opinion. The Kurdish territories, annexed abusively are ensuring the economic viability of these states, a fact that in the Kurdish opinion implies the expoliation of the subsoil natural resources. In the left parties speech, Kurdistan is presented like a colony deprived by the imperialists powers.

Frequently used is also the comparison of these states with the Right despotic regimes of Europe and that of the proeminent faces of the state presidents like Mustafa Kemal, Reza Şah şi Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler. To enhance the repression treatement that is applied to them, the Kurds, trying to create an image on the extermination politics applied to them, are often invoking the fate of some peoples like *the Czechs and Polish*²⁶ wich had been under the occupation of the Nazi Germany, or the fate of the *Jews*.²⁷

Thus, in the Kurdish marxist point of view, the victory on the Third Reich, so celebrated in the Western states, is a fake one, because the politics of Irak, Iran and Turkey are nothing but a continuation of his rasial and chauvinistic politics.

*On this day, when the world is looking toward the dawn of a new era in which nations and individuals will lead a life free from fear, oppression and persecution; at a time whwn the world is celebrating the Nazi defeat and their racial and Chauvinistic theories, we find the Goverments of Turkey, Iran and Iraq filling the sky of Kurdistan with airplanes and raining death and ruin on peaceful villages and other inhabited areas-their bombs destroying the towns and their machine guns mowing down the bodies of innocent children, oldmen and women. The foregoing Govenrments formed material courts and established concentration camps and prisons throughout the country, throwing into their dungeons innocent people for no crime and without trial.*²⁸

As we can see the Western image is once again associated to Iraq, Iran and Turkey and their policies. This time, the accusation of indifference is replaced by that of complicity at the crimes against the Kurds and at the rejection of any attempt to regain their rights.

²³ *Letter of Mehemed Hilmy Bey...*1949, p. 9.

²⁴ *The Kurdish National League to...*1982, p. 41.

²⁵ *Petition Submitted by the Chiefs...*, 1982, p. 43.

²⁶ *Protest of Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Iraq...*1982, p. 161.

²⁷ *Protest of Democratic Party of Kurdistan in Iraq...*1982, p. 161.

²⁸ *Kurdish Protest to His Excellency ...*1982, p. 80.

Much more, they assert that the defeat of the Kurdish revolts in Turkey, at the beginning of the 20th Century was possible just through the support provided by Great Britain and France.²⁹ In Iraq, the defeat of the national movement laid by Barzani was possible just through the *imperialist support*³⁰ and the Republic of the Mahabad anihilation was achieved through the *foreign forces*.³¹ They consider that the simple deffensive for the rescue of their rights and traditions from the agressor is labeled by the westerners like an act of murder and savagery. The main reason of this reaction is in the Kurdish opinion the fact that their requests are endangering the territorial division made by the Great Powers in Middle East, and implicitly their economic and strategical interests in the area.

Thus, in the Kurdish speech on the enemy, whether it is about simple nationalists or whether it is about the adepts of the marxism-leninism applied to the Kurdish cause it can be noticed the same characters, the Great Powers, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran, along all the 20th Century.

If earlier I spoke about the varying forms of the enemy image or *enemies* in this case, a very interesting aspect is the way they are perceived in the biographical literature. As a recently appeared literary genre, the memoires are giving us a more recent and personal perspective on the enemy. The Kurdish memoires are not focusing on the intimate emotions, abandoning this aspect on a second plan. They are presentations of the Kurdish people drama, lived at an individual level and the impact of this drama on the individual evolution of the character from childhood untill the manhood. In the case of this literary genre, the peculiarities of the enemy perception are resulting from the representation forms and symbols of the enemy, being influenced in the same time by the personal experience of each author.

A first example is the biography, *Ma vie de kurde*, of Nouredine Zaza, born in the Kurdish region from Turkey, writer and political leader, founder of the *Kurdish Democratic Party* and of the *Association of Kurdish Students in Europe*. Presenting the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Turkish Republic, the memories from the childhood dominate, from the enemy perception, through the proeminent face of Mustafa Kemal and his policies. In the remarks about the the childhood which are overlapping with the end of the war and the beginning of the first revolts, it can be noticed that some of the author's assertions are influenced by an ulterior understating of the last years events.

*All the evil was coming from the machiavellism of Mustafa Kemal. Atatürk solemnly promised to the kurds a complete autonomy within the Turkish Republik. Nevertheless in 1923, after he repleced the Treaty of Sèvres with the Treaty of Lausanne he changed his mind and adopted a hostile attitude regarding the Kurdish velleities.*³²

Highlightening the physical repression of the Kurds during Sheikh Said rebellion, the author is creating the image of a criminal Kemalist regime:

²⁹ *Memorandum of the Kurdish Rizgari Party*....1982, p. 87.

³⁰ *Protest of Democratic Party of Kurdistanin Iraq*1982 , p161.

³¹ *Manifesto from the Party of the Kurdish Democratic Army*...1982, p.148.

³² Zaza 1982, p. 30.

*The Turks of Mustafa Kemal massacred the kurds with a ferocity and a cruelty identic similar to those of the sultan tutrks during the persecutions of the Greeks, Armenians and Bulgarians. Mustafa Kemal sent the so-called special military Courts of the Independance, which condemned thousands of persons with a specific military speed. The women and children in villages, which opposed resistance to the turkish army have been gathered in the courtyards of their houses and shoot from the balconies by the soldiers.*³³

It can be noticed a transposition of this common tragedy at the individual level.

*Every day, every moment, I was shaking for my father, for my brother and for my uncle. It was possible that they could have been tortured and humiliated and we never seen them again? All my family was living this horrrble perspective.*³⁴

Also, talking about the changes determined by the Kemalist measures on the private life of his family, N. Zaza is presenting all the process of annihilation of the Kurdish society. It is enhanced, in this way, the assimilation at institutional levels, in school, administration, even in the exploitation of the subsoil resources.

*Meanwhile, Mustafa Kemal began to change the customs and to westernize Turkey. After he forbade the fez or the turban, to introduce the hat, he decided to shake the fundamentals of the Kurdish society, attacking one of the most sacred traditions: he forbade the practice of the gestic house. This was a big sacrifice for the Kurdish people.*³⁵

Under the pressure of his collaborators, Mustafa Kemal decided to democratize the regime and to resort to other ways except the force and repression to turkify the kurds. The new electoral laws were promulgated. On 15 november 1927, the municipal elections were supposed to take place all over Turkey.

*The subprefecture of Maden became a prefecture and was delegated to reorganise in all details the exploitation of the iron. A boarding-school was annexed to the primary school of boys with the purpose to recrute boys from the countryside, non-speakers of turkish language. A part of the town students were kicked out, to be replaced with those from the countryside, who were freely feed, dressed and lettered, learning every day the turkish language and the superiority of the turkish people.*³⁶

We can notice the creation of a stereotype of the Kurdish memoirs: the prevalence of a negative character on the childhood. Many times this character is coinciding with the image of the common enemy. If in the case of Nouredine Zaza the character that can be identified in this sense is Mustafa Kemal, in the case of another volume of memoirs, *Le fusil de mon père*, belonging to Hineer Saleem, there can be detected two characters, Hassan Al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein.

The recent history of Kurdish people is discovered through the daily scenes, seen and lived by the author: the cultural assimilation, the attempts of physical elimination, the resistance fight

³³ Zaza 1982, p. 30.

³⁴ Zaza 1982, p. 31.

³⁵ Zaza 1982, p. 41.

³⁶ Zaza 1982, p. 45.

of the Kurds from Iraq are accompanied by the *two putschists*.³⁷ They are strong characters in the author's memoirs.

*Two names were said unceasing in the radio that we were knowing by rote: Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein Takriti, the two putschists.*³⁸

Another very interesting point of view is that of Yachar Kemal, presented in his memoirs *Entretiens avec Alain Bosque*.³⁹ In this book, the author does not insist on a negative character of the childhood. All the references in this sense are resumed to a discrete, but symbolic mention of the evolution from the childhood to the teen-age. In this moment the author becomes aware of the political situation of the Kurds.

Only in the adult years is presented a Turkey with the image of the torture. The memories of this period are filled by criticism, directed at Turkey, at the Kemalist ideology and especially at the attempt to imitate the West.

*... the refuse of the oppression and of the humiliation were sacred to me. This is why, neither oppression, neither the face to face situation with death were not impressing me... I resisted all this time. Many years I was not able to speak about those tortures I suffered in the year of 1950, not even to those who were close to me. In the same time, as a human soul I was hating myself and those tortionars. It was like I had been the first human being subjected to tortures and humiliations.*⁴⁰

Asserting that Turkey is a caricature of the West⁴¹, named liberalism, he says:

*The slavish imitation of the West became a real obsession. Is one thing to want to assimilate the western culture and another thing is to signe it. The West has two centuries. Is the reason why we are not able to create.*⁴²

Another feature of the adult period is, for all the three memoir volumes discussed in this article, the resumption of the Great Powers theme, specifically their guilt and indifference regarding the Kurds' fate. Thus, it can be noticed an coincidence between the public attitude and the private attitude. Of course, this is more perceptive in the case of Leyla Zana's book, *Writings from Prison*, which comprises the letters sent by the author to different persons, during her custody years (1994-2004). Although she is supporting the idea of a peaceful solution for the Kurdish problem in Turkey, Leyla Zana's speech is very critical regarding Turkey. Marked by the experience of captivity, she is focusing on the Turkey's cultural, political and physical abuses applied on the Kurdish minority. Identifying Turkey with *the Inquisition*, with *the totalitarianism* and *the artificial parliamentarism*, Leyla Zana is resuming the theme of the fake imitation of the Western countries, of the Turkish hypocrisy and the lack of reaction of the Western countries. In this way, she is proving once again the overlapping of the public and private visions on the enemy.

³⁷ Saleem 2004, p. 21.

³⁸ Saleem 2004, p. 21.

³⁹ The book is presenting the years 1920-1992.

⁴⁰ Kemal 1992, p. 73.

⁴¹ Kemal 1992, p. 117.

Thus, it can be concluded that the memories are becoming the expression of the social and political public emotions, presented in a personal manner. In this context, a person is representing just a part of an organism, of a party or of a political movement. This fact is an evidence of the way in which the fight for self-determination penetrated all the social spheres, creating a profound a politicalized society. One of the main features of the Kurdish biographical literature, wheteher it belongs to writers or political personalities, is the fact that the political option is a crucial factor in the perception of the enemy. The intimate conscience of the author is overlaping many times with thr public conscience. Therefore, the common enemy becomes the personal enemy.

In present days, in the texts posted on the internet, the general features highlighted here, regarding the Kurds' perception of the enemy, are more aggressive, especially those belonging to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Just a few of these texts have been used in this article, because they can form the object of a separate research on the Kurdish identity and especially on the perception of the enemy.

In this study, I tried to outline the main features of the Kurdish speech on the enemy. Regardless the variations in this sense, determined by the political orientation through nationalism, or by the combination of the last one with the marxist ideology, it can be asserted the crucial influence of the 1923 division of the kurds on their speech on the enemy. The reason why I opted for the image of the enemy as a subject of this study is the fact that it represents the paradigm of the Kurdish identitary speech. The enemy becomes a so strong element in the process of identification, that it is projected on the self-image structure.

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**AN EXTRAORDINARY VOTIVE STELA
FOR AMUN AND UPWAWET
(CM004: Cairo JE 47381)**

Terence DuQuesne

Background

In 1922, a trove of 500 or more votive stelae was discovered in the Salakhana tomb. This belonged to Djefaihapy III, nomarch of Asyut in the XIIth Dynasty. During the XVIIIth and subsequent Dynasties, this tomb apparently served as a shrine where objects of devotion were deposited. The use of any Egyptian tomb for such a purpose seems to be otherwise unattested. For this and many other reasons, the Salakhana trove is extremely important. The stelae and figurines found there provide unparalleled evidence about life and religion in Middle Egypt during the New Kingdom. Most of these objects were dedicated to the local god Upwawet, and shed a good deal of light on Egyptian popular religion and cult practices. They also provide significant information about the names and occupations of the inhabitants of the Lycopolitan nome, especially in the Ramesside Period. In terms of artistic quality, the stelae range from very fine execution to very crude craftsmanship. Their donors cover the spectrum from members of the privileged classes to the very poor. Several are iconographically unique.

For most of the past decade the author has been researching and cataloguing the stelae from this trove, most of which are held in the store-rooms of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.¹ I am in process of preparing a

¹*T DuQuesne* Votive stelae for Upwawet from the Salakhana trove, DE 48 (2000) 5-47; *Id* Documents on the cult of the jackal deities at Asyut, DE 53 (2002) 9-30; *Id* Hathor of Medjed, DE 54 (2002) 39-60; *Id* Divine twins at Asyut: the role of Upwawet and Anubis on the Salakhana stelae, in: Egyptian museum collections around the world. Fs Cairo Museum, ed *M Eldamaty & M Trad* (Le Caire 2002) I 287-298; *Id* Exalting the god: processions of Upwawet as Asyut in the New Kingdom, DE 57 (2003) 21-45; *Id* Empowering the divine standard: an unusual motif on the Salakhana stelae, DE 58 (2004) 29-56; *Id* The Salakhana stelae: a unique trove of votive objects from Asyut, in: Proceedings of the IXth International Congress of Egyptologists, Grenoble 2004, ed *J-C Goyon & C Cardin* (Leuven 2007) I 461-474 ; *Id* Gender, class, and devotion: social and demographic aspects of the Salakhana stelae, DE 63 (2005 [2007]) 41-57 [abstract in: British Egyptology Congress, Cambridge, 24-25 September 2005. Abstracts (2005) 5-6]; *Id* Private devotion and public practice, in: Fs *AB Lloyd* (2006), forthcoming.

comprehensive edition of the whole series of objects from the Salakhana tomb, most of which have remained not merely unpublished but entirely undocumented. However, a few of these stelae have been published and annotated by scholars, in particular Hellmut Brunner, and Peter Munro, Hellmut Brunner, Nicole Durisch, and Ahmed Eissa.²

Work on this object

Stela CM004 (Cairo JE 47381: **plates 1-4**) is fully published here for the first time: a full description, and a transcription of the texts with transliteration and commentary, are appended to this article. The object has previously attracted a limited amount of attention. It was first mentioned very briefly by Charles Kuentz, who provided a drawing of the bottom of the stela's three registers to illustrate the Nile goose.³ G A Wainwright, in the course of a paper on aspects of the god Amun, mentioned the syncretistic form Amen-Re-Kamutef as a bull, and included a drawing of the top left part of the stela.⁴ Ahmed Sadek referred to the object as likely to have been a gesture of thanks to the deities. He did not illustrate it but translated the short section of text relating to the bull.⁵ Ahmed Eissa has noted the forms of Amun manifested on the stela.⁶ More recently Dieter Kessler has discussed some aspects of the object as part of his research into sacred animals as *h3*-forms.⁷

²GA Wainwright The aniconic form of Amon in the New Kingdom, ASAE 28 (1928) 175f [175-189]; H Brunner Eine Dankstela an Upuaut, MDAIK 16 (1958) 5-19; P Munro Einige Votivstelen an Wpw3wt, ZÄS 88 (1963) 48-58; JJ Clère A propos du nom du XIIIe nome de Haute Egypte, MDAIK 24 (1969) 93-95; Al Sadek Popular religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom (Hildesheim 1987) 40-42; A Eissa Untersuchungen zum Gott Upuaut bis zum Ende Des Neuen Reiches (unpublished diss. University of Cairo 1989) 84f, 101f fig 51, 121f, pls 23-29 figs 62-73; Id Zum Lepidotos-Fisch als eine Erscheinungsform des Osiris, GM 124 (1991) 43-49; N Durisch Culte des canidés à Assiout: trois nouvelles stèles dédiées à Oupouaout, BIFAO 93 (1993) 205-221; A Eissa Zwei Votivstelen eines Beamten namens Parênacht aus Siût, SAK 21 (1994) 59-64; Id Zur Etymologie des modernen Namens vom grossen Amuntempel in Theben: 'Karnak', GM 144 (1995) 31-39; Id Zwei königliche Stelen der 18. Dynastie aus Siût, MDAIK 52 (1996) 83-85 + pls 16-17.

³C Kuentz L'oie du Nil (Chenalopex Aegyptiaca) dans l'antique Egypte (Lyon 1926) 12, 41 fig 23.

⁴Wainwright ASAE 28 (1928) 183 fig 6.

⁵Al Sadek Popular religion in Egypt (Hildesheim 1987) 41.

⁶Eissa GM 144 (1995) 34 figs 5-6.

⁷D Kessler Die kultische Bindung der Ba-Konzeption, 2. Teil: die Ba-Zitate auf den Kultstelen und Ostraka des Neuen Reiches, SAK 29 (2001) 162f, 168-172 [139-186].



PLATE I: The stela Cairo CM004 (JE 47381)

Photograph: Ahmed Amin

Dating

Accurate dating of this object is difficult, but current research on Egyptian costumes and hairstyles offers important evidence. The short kilts worn by each of the object's two donors, with their distinctive heart-shaped or triangular pleats, indicate that both men were military personnel. Such apparel is very similar to that found on representations of military personnel in the Memphite tomb of Horemheb. But the status of the donors is mysterious. On the one hand, one would expect an elaborate, well-crafted stela such as CM004, especially one with so many unique features, to have been dedicated by military officers of at least medium rank. On the other, the two donors wear a style of dress which is usually associated with infantrymen and charioteers rather than with members of the officer class. Soldiers of different ranks wore kilts distinguished by the triangular or heart-shaped pleat, but officers wore a longer version with a loincloth underneath, while members of lower ranks wore a significantly shorter kilt.⁸ Both types of kilt are figured on the Salakhana stelae.⁹

The hairstyle of both donors is the feathered cut which was favoured briefly in the New Kingdom. It was popular during the Amarna period, when it was worn by Nefertiti and other royal women, and disappeared by the XIXth Dynasty. This hairstyle, which has been misleadingly referred to as the 'Nubian wig' is cut in up to seven layers: the presence of three or fewer layers appears to indicate that the wearer is of relatively low status.¹⁰

⁸*JM Johnstone* Styles of military clothing from the New Kingdom, in preparation 2005; *E Staehelin* Tracht, LÄ VI (1986) 733 [726-737]; *H Bonnet* Die ägyptische Tracht bis zum Ende des Neuen Reiches (Leipzig 1917) 7f. This type of kilt is clearly seen on a block from the tomb of Horemheb in the Brooklyn Museum (no 32.103): *JD Cooney* A relief from the tomb of Haremhab, JEA 30 (1944) 2-4 + pl 2.

⁹Military outfits are seen on **CM061** (JE 68742), *DuQuesne* DE 58 (2004) 37, 50, 51f pl VI; **CM200** (two persons), *DuQuesne* in: *Fs AB Lloyd* (2006), forthcoming; **CM025** (JE 68574); **CM101**; **CM117**; **CM164**; **CM329**; **CM333**; **CM353**; **CM363**; and **CM466**, all unpublished. Stela **CM056** (JE 68737), unpublished, has a very rare form with a double pleat.

¹⁰On the 'Nubian cut': *G Tassie* personal communication 2005; *C Aldred* Hair styles and history, BMMA 15 (1957) 141-147; *R Hanke* Änderungen von Bildern und Inschriften während der Amarna-Zeit, SAK 2 (1975) 83f [79-93] this type of style on Queen Nefertiti; *R Hanke* Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis (Hildesheim 1978) 214 fig 2 (no 3), 215 fig 3 (no 5), 221 fig 9 (no 17), examples of this hairstyle on royal Amarna women; *J Samson* Amarna crowns and wigs, JEA 59 (1973) 56-59 [47-59]; *M Eaton-Krauss* Miscellanea Amarnensia, CdE 56 (1981) 252-258 [245-264], discussion of Amarna examples.

There is nothing in the iconography of the divine animals shown which assists us much in dating the stela, except perhaps for the ithyphallic goose in the bottom register. This figure, which is analogous to the hybrid entities such as winged jackals seen in Amduat-type papyri,¹¹ seems characteristic of Dynasties XVIII-XIX. Odd orthographical features are few and not helpful for dating: the eye-sign  is twice replaced by the painted-eye sign , and the *bjz*-glyph  (if the reading is correct) is rather strangely rendered. The expression *m33-bw-nfr*, found four times on the stela under consideration does not antedate the XVIIIth and is attested up to the XXVIth Dynasty (see Annex, below). The names *R^c-ms* and *Wp-w3wt-ms* are common in the New Kingdom: the abbreviated form of the latter, *Wpi-ms*, occurs on another Salakhana stela which is probably Ramesside or later.¹² On the available evidence, this stela was probably made in late Dynasty XVIII.

The donors

A most unusual feature of this object is the fact that it was dedicated by two apparently coeval male individuals. This is the case with none of the other Salakhana stelae, most of which were vowed by either a single male, a single female, or a male with a spouse and/or children. Admittedly, there are two of these stelae which depict two males alone,¹³ but in both cases one is shown significantly smaller than the other, which suggests that these individuals were father and son. One should perhaps also mention that a few objects from this trove represent the same male person twice.¹⁴

One of the donors is named as *R^c-ms* and figured once, in the top register, without any attribution. The other, *Wpi-ms*, is shown twice and referred to four times, once each with the puzzling epithets *hsy-ꜥ3* and *m33-bw-nfr*. *R^c-ms* seems to be subordinate to *Wpi-ms*. The two men are indistinguishable, as both wear an identical type of wig and the kilt associated with military personnel. It may be asked what the relationship of the pair could have been. Were they brothers, colleagues,

¹¹Cf *J Leibovitch* Le griffon (Le Caire 1946) 15, 34; *E Hornung* Komposite Gottheiten in der ägyptischen Ikonographie, in: *Images as media*, ed *C Uehlinger* (Freiburg/Schweiz 2000) 20 [1-20].

¹²See Description below, notes (a) and (g).

¹³Stelae **CM051** (JE 68732) and **CM094**, both unpublished.

¹⁴Stela **CM077**: *DuQuesne* in: *Fs Cairo Museum I* (2002) 288, 297 pl 1 a-b.

friends, or lovers? Perhaps they were twins, like the brothers *Swty* and *Hr* whose funeral stela dates from the time of Amenhotpe III.¹⁵ John Baines has proposed that *Ni-^cnh-Hnmw* and *Hnmw-htp*, the owners of the well-known Vth Dynasty tomb at Saqqara, were twins.¹⁶ However, it has also been suggested that they were lovers, which is not necessarily inconsistent with the fact that both were married.¹⁷ The few references in Egyptian literature to sexual relationships between males¹⁸ tend to be pejorative, certainly when the context indicates coercion, but are not universally so, and the matter of attitudes to them is the subject of debate. How such unions would have been regarded in Middle Egypt during the New Kingdom is unclear.

Iconography

Stela JE 47381 has three registers. The top one shows *R^c-ms* kneeling before Upwawet on his standard, behind whom is a bull. The jackal deity is seen in his classic canonical form, in the form of a standing jackal, as on most of the Salakhana stelae. The presence of Upwawet would have been regarded as highly desirable because he was the deity who presided over the Lycopolitan nome (XIIIth of Upper Egypt). In the upper register, he is accorded his usual epithet *Wp-w3wt sm^cw^c b3-t3wy* 'Upwawet of Upper Egypt, Controller of the Two Lands'. This manifestation of Upwawet is also seen on the middle register, where he is accompanied by his twin, *Wp-w3wt mhyt* 'Upwawet of Lower Egypt'. This might have been intended to parallel the presence of twins, if that is the donors were. More probably, the adjacent figures of the jackal deity reflect the need for complementarity so often evinced in Egyptian religion, as on so many Middle Kingdom funerary

¹⁵IES Edwards British Museum hieroglyphic texts VIII (London 1939) 22-25 pl 21.

¹⁶J Baines Egyptian twins, *Orientalia* 54 (1985) 467 [461-482]; AM Moussa & H Altenmüller *Das Grab des Nianchchnum und Chnumhotep* (Mainz 1977) 22 regard the two as either ordinary brothers or twins.

¹⁷W Westendorf *Homosexualität*, LÄ II (1977) 1273 [1272-1274]; G Reeder Same-sex desire, conjugal constructs, and the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, *World Archaeology* 32 (2000) 193-208.

¹⁸TJ Deakin Evidence for homosexuality in ancient Egypt, *International Journal of Greek Love* 1 (1965) 31-38; L Manniche Some aspects of ancient Egyptian sexual life, *Orientalia* 38 (1977) 14f [11-23]; H Goedicke Unrecognized sportings, *JARCE* 6 (1967) 97-102; RB Parkinson 'Homosexual' desire and Middle Kingdom literature, *JEA* 81 (1995) 57-75.

stelae.¹⁹ In both contexts, the wish to acknowledge Upwawet as a major god of the whole of Egypt would be understandable. However, not one of the other Salakhana stelae depicts these two hypostases of Upwawet together.

In both the top and the middle register, Upwawet is shown on a standard. This is conventional, but what is less common is the fact that the standard closely resembles a sledge. Upwawet's *alter ego* Anubis is closely associated with sledges, especially in his capacity as *nb-R3-s3w* 'lord of Ro-setau'.²⁰

Amun or Amen-Re, as the pre-eminent deity of Thebes, is frequently the object of veneration on devotional stelae, especially those from Deir el-Medina,²¹ where he is usually seen in his anthropomorphic form. Sometimes this iconography makes him indistinguishable from Min.²² While the great majority of the Salakhana stelae were dedicated to the local god Upwawet, a few do show Amen-Re in human guise.²³ The bull seen at left of the top register is there described as *Imn-R^c K3-mwt.f*. It is more usual, at least on votive stelae, to find the ram as a sacred animal of Amun when the god is not depicted anthropomorphically,²⁴ but one other stela from Asyut depicts him as a bull,²⁵ and on another the feet of a quadruped which may be a bull are visible.²⁶ The expression *k3-mwt.f* 'bull of his mother' seems, in the view of Helmuth Jacobsohn, to have been applied originally to the pharaoh in

¹⁹*M Malaise* Les représentations de divinités sur les stèles du Moyen Empire, in: *Orientalia J Duchesne-Guillemin* emerito oblata (Leiden 1984) 396f, 399f, 402f, 411 [393-420]; *R Hözl* Die Giebelfelddekoration von Stelen des Mittleren Reichs (Wien 1990) 79-123.

²⁰*T DuQuesne* Jackal at the Shaman's Gate (Oxford 1991) 24f.

²¹*B Gunn* The religion of the poor in ancient Egypt, *JEA* 3 (1916) 81-94.

²²Examples: *M Tosi & A Roccati* Stele e altre epigrafi di Deir el Medina (Torino 1972) 60f, 271 no 50028; 66, 274 no 50033.

²³Stelae **CM229**, **CM230**, **CM257**, and **CM261**, all unpublished. There are undoubtedly more such stelae from the Salakhana tomb to be found, since *Wainwright* *ASAE* 28 (1928) 175 mentions 14 of these objects as having been dedicated to Amun or Amen-Re.

²⁴*ML Bierbrier* British Museum hieroglyphic texts X (London 1982) 27f pl 65.

²⁵Stela **CM 226**, unpublished.

²⁶Stela **CM211**, unpublished.

order to emphasize the legitimacy of the divine king through his capacity for endless renewal, and to symbolize the potency and fecundating capacity of the monarch.²⁷ From the XVIIIth Dynasty onwards, the epithet *k3-mwt.f* is applied, appropriately enough, to the generative gods Amun and Min,²⁸ and the bull is one of their most obvious manifestations.²⁹ The latest appearance of *K3-mwt.f* is in the Greek Hermetic writings, where Καμῆφης is mentioned as being a demiurge.³⁰

Returning to the middle register, we notice beneath the two jackals an offering-table, on which are cuts of meat or game. To right there is a large eel or snake, above which are shown a series of smaller eels and fish, rather indeterminately rendered. At the very bottom of the stela, another undulating snake-like figure is seen. On this stela, as elsewhere, it is difficult to distinguish eels from snakes. The eel is reasonably familiar as a sacred animal of Atum in his aspect of primeval deity.³¹ Late Period bronze statuettes of eels, sometimes hybridized with heads and other characteristics of serpents, and occasionally with human heads, have been found.³² While eels are not, as far as I know, otherwise attested on votive stelae, snakes do figure on some of those from Deir el-Medina.³³ In most cases they are definitely representations of Mertseger, the goddess of the Western mountain on the West Bank of Thebes.³⁴ So far as our stela is concerned, such an attribution is unlikely. The eel or snake in the middle register and the snake at the

²⁷*H Jacobsohn* Die dogmatische Stellung des Königs in der Theologie der alten Ägypter (Glückstadt 1939) 13-22, 33-35, 69f; *Ib* Der altägyptische, der christliche und der moderne Mythos, *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 37 (1968 [1970]) 411-448 [repr in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed *H Jungthaumayr* (Hildesheim 1992) 79-116]; *BH Stricker* Camephris (Amsterdam 1975) 3-6.

²⁸*K Sethe* Amun und die acht Urgötter von Hermopolis (Leipzig 1929) §§24-25; *H Gauthier* Les fêtes du dieu Min (Le Caire 1931) 132f; examples of Min and Min-Amun as *k3-mwt.f* are LD III 189h (Great Temple at Abu Simbel) and 220a (Karnak temple).

²⁹*E Otto* Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stierkulte in Aegypten (Leipzig 1938) 53f.

³⁰*Corpus Hermeticum*, ed *AD Nock & A-J Festugièr* IV (Paris 1954) 10.

³¹*I Gamer-Wallert* Fische und Fischkulte im Alten Ägypten (Wiesbaden 1970) 115f; *D Sahrhage* Fischfang und Fischkulte im alten Ägypten (Mainz 1998) 146.

³²*K Myśliwiec* Studien zum Gott Atum I (Hildesheim 1978) 131-138 pls 35-42; *T DuQuesne* Double snake coffin, in: The quest for immortality, ed *E Hornung & BM Bryan* (Washington 2002) 192.

³³*M Tosi & A Roccati* Stele e altre epigrafi di Deir el Medina (Torino 1972) 98f, 288 no 50060 (definitely Mertseger); 291 nos 50064, 50065 (deity not stated); *EAW Budge* British Museum hieroglyphic texts V (London 1914) 11f pl 42 no 490 (Mertseger as a coiled snake).

³⁴*J Yoyotte* A propos de quelques idées reçues: Méresger, la Butte et les cobras, in: Deir el-Médineh et la Vallée des Rois, ed *G Andreu* (2003) 281-307.

bottom are much more likely to be associated with Amen-Re. Snakes are among his sacred animals: the serpent *Km-3t.f* ‘the one who completes his time’ is an important example. This entity is mentioned by Iamblichus as an alternate to Amun as creator.³⁵ Kematef was in Ptolemaic times equated with Amun as *Urgott* and lord of time: his burial-place at Medinet Habu was also, from the later Ramesside Period, a cult-centre of Amun.³⁶ The snake(s) on the Asyut stela may be a rather elliptical reference to this manifestation of Amun. Kessler’s suggestion that these snakes are associated with Upwawet is predicated on, among other things, their being cobras, which far from certain.³⁷

This leaves the extraordinary iconography of the lower register, whose composition appears to be unique. To left, the donor *Wpi-ms* kneels in adoration before a goose with flapping wings, behind which are two recumbent goats. This goose is rendered with an erect phallus. One would perhaps expect the bird to be connected with Geb, but his association with the goose is somewhat equivocal.³⁸ Anseridae are certainly sacred animals of Amun or Amen-Re.³⁹ The goose was regarded by the Egyptians as a primordial creature.⁴⁰ As a hypostasis of Amun, it was also considered to be a symbol of music.⁴¹ An interesting example of the offering of a goose to a deity occurs on a Late Period snake coffin.⁴² Geese, individually or in twos, are occasionally represented on New Kingdom devotional stelae, mostly if not exclusively from Deir el-Medina, though apparently never in hybrid forms.⁴³

³⁵Iamblichus *De mysteriis* 8.3.

³⁶Sethe *Amun und die acht Urgötter* §§38, 106, 107, 116, 124; *W Barta* *Kematef*, LÄ III (1980) 382f.

³⁷Kessler *SAK* 29 (2001) 169.

³⁸*H te Velde* *Geb*, LÄ II (1977) 427-429.

³⁹*J Vandier* *L’oie d’Amon*, *MonPiot* 57 (1971) 1-41; *L Kákosy* *Götter, Tier-*, LÄ II (1977) 661f [660-664]; *E Otto* *Amun*, LÄ I (1975) 239 [237-248].

⁴⁰*M Görg* *Die Barke der Sonne* (Freiburg i B 2001) 41f; *O Ndigi Gb / Kb / Gbgb / kòbá / kòbákòbá* ou le nom identique du dieu de la terre et l’oiseau créateur mythologique chez les Egyptiens et les Basaá du Cameroun, in: *África antigua*, ed *J Cervelló Autuori* (Barcelona 2001) 227 [219-236].

⁴¹*H Hickmann* *Dieux et déesses de la musique*, *Cahiers d’Histoire Egyptienne* ser VI fasc 1 (1954) 33f, 54f, 57 [31-59]; *A Barahona* *Ancient objects related to music and ancient Egypt*, in: *Egyptian museum collections around the world*, ed *M Eldamaty & M Trad* I (Le Caire 2002) 83 [75-86].

⁴²*W Spiegelberg* *Der Schlangengott Pe-Neb-onch*, *ZÄS* 62 (1927) 37f + pl 1; *H Schäfer* *Das Schlangensärgchen Nr 7232 der Berliner ägyptischen Sammlung*, *ZÄS* 62 (1927) 39-42.

⁴³*Kuentz* *L’oie du Nil* 10-12 figs 13-23; *Vandier* *MonPiot* 57 (1971) 28-31, 41; *Tosi & Roccati* *Stele e altre epigrafi* 284 no 50054.

Other deities identified with the bird include Horus and Seth.⁴⁴ Of some interest from the point of view of our stela, the goose is also once referred to in the Pyramid Texts in association with Upwawet: there the jackal deity 'makes the king fly to the sky... like a *smn*-goose'.⁴⁵

It is of considerable interest that the jackal too was regarded as a sacred animal of Amun, which gives extra weight to the appearance of the three Upwawet jackals on our stela. On two ostraca from Deir el-Medina, the term 'rampant jackal' (*wnš didi*) occurs in reference to Amun.⁴⁶ The two couchant goats at the bottom right of the Salakhana stela also appear to be without exact parallel in Egyptian iconography. These animals are probably connected with Amun and, to a lesser extent, with Upwawet. We know that goats were sacrificed to Upwawet at Asyut in the Middle Kingdom.⁴⁷ The exact identification of the animal presents difficulties. A degree of confusion has been noted between the celebrated ram of Amun and the goat which is also sacred to the deity.⁴⁸ This is not helped by the resemblance of the mouflon, a wild form of sheep, to the goat.⁴⁹ The point is that, regardless of the species of the animal concerned, it must symbolize the male generative capacity which is the god's most important attribute. Classical accounts have the animal of Mendes, as an incarnation of Pan, ritually copulating with women.⁵⁰ That Pan should be construed there as a Greek appellation of the Egyptian deities is confirmed by texts from the Ptolemaic temples which describe similar practices.⁵¹ It is also the case that graffiti from Akhmim have been found which show an association between the goat and Min.⁵²

⁴⁴Vandier MonPiot 57 (1971) 28-33.

⁴⁵Pyr §463 (spell 302).

⁴⁶H-W Fischer-Elfert Lesefunde im literarischen Steinbruch von Deir el-Medineh (Wiesbaden 1997) 121, 123 (no 24) cf 160-162 (no 30). Discussion in *T DuQuesne* The spiritual and the sexual in ancient Egypt, DE 61 (2005) 22f [7-24].

⁴⁷FLI Griffith The inscriptions of Siut and Der Rifeh (London 1889) pl 7 (I 292).

⁴⁸H Kees Der Götterglaube im alten Ägypten² (Berlin 1956) 80f.

⁴⁹A Cabrol Les mouflons du dieu Amon-Rê, in: Gs *J Quaegebeur* (Leuven 1998) I 529-538.

⁵⁰Eg Herodotus 2. 42 & 46.

⁵¹P Derchain Mendès et les femmes, Enchoria 25 (1999) 20-23. Cf also *HJ Thissen* 'Der grosse Pan ist gestorben', in: Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'antiquité, ed F Labrique (Le Caire 2002) 181 [177-183].

⁵²KP Kuhlmann Materialien zur Archäologie und Geschichte des Raumes von Achmim (Mainz 1983) 7.

It seems clear that the two animals on our stela are goats. They are represented in substantially the same way as the caprids seen on Old Kingdom reliefs, which have been identified by the zoologist Patrick Houlihan as examples of the scimitar-horned goat *Capra aegagrus*.⁵³ The goat as an animal of Amun is occasionally found on New Kingdom votive stelae. One of these describes the goat as *b3-ntrw*,⁵⁴ and the other gives the animal, which could be either a goat or a mouflon, as *b3-šps n-Imn-Rc*.⁵⁵ The motif of the goat does not occur elsewhere in the Salakhana trove. The juxtaposition of goats and geese, as on the stela under study, is otherwise attested only in the Ramesside pSallier IV, where the reader is advised not to eat either goose or goat on a particular day.⁵⁶

It should be noted that the *b3w*, or hypostases, of Amun were regarded as being connected with miraculous events such as direct visions of the deity, in one case after the querent had organized a procession in the deity's honour.⁵⁷ This would help to explain the expression *bi3-nfr* 'the great marvel' as applied on the Salakhana stela to the bull of Amen-Re.⁵⁸

Sacred animals

On Egyptian votive stelae, where sacred animals are shown, it is usual for there to be only one example. Here there are several. Conceivably, one or more could be regarded as sacrifices, but this is unlikely. The fact that two jackals are represented is explained by the mastery of Upwawet over both Lower and Upper Egypt. Why there are two goats is much more problematic. What all the animal figures on this stela have in common is that they are emblems of male vigour. As noted,

⁵³PF Houlihan The animal world of the pharaohs (Le Caire 1996) 24f; L Störk Steinbock, LÄ V (1984) 1276.

⁵⁴Budge British Museum hieroglyphic texts V 11 pl 42 (no 356) (Deir el-Medina, Ramesside).

⁵⁵H Bonnet Bilderatlas zur Religionsgeschichte: Die ägyptische Religion (Leipzig 1924) fig 49 (no provenance given, New Kingdom).

⁵⁶C Leitz Tagewählerei (Wiesbaden 1994) I 46f (I *šht* 23).

⁵⁷G Posener La piété personnelle avant l'âge amarnienne, RdE 27 (1975) 195-210; Cabrol in: Gs J Quaegebeur I 537. Cf JF Borghouts Divine intervention in ancient Egypt and its manifestation (*b3w*), in: Gleanings from Deir el-Medina, ed RJ Demarée & JJ Janssen (Leiden 1982) 24-27 [1-70].

⁵⁸See also below, Description, note (d).

Amen-Re embodies this attribute. He was also, in the New Kingdom, the principal national deity, and the Salakhana stelae provide important evidence for him as σύνναος θεός at Asyut. But the jackals too have important, if often concealed, sexual aspects. Thus, on another Salakhana stela Upwawet is termed *shm-phty* ‘powerful of vigour’,⁵⁹ and in the temple of Hibis he is described as *wtt-ꜥt* ‘the great begetter’.⁶⁰

Context

A full description of the stela of *Wpi-ms* and *Rꜥ-ms* follows the discursive text of this article.

D Kessler has contributed an extraordinary amount to our knowledge of animal cults, and his opinions on the likely purpose of this stela should be accorded respect. However, his present position appears to be that stelae normally regarded as votive, and animal cults more generally, relate to official temple practice rather than to private religious observances.⁶¹ In his analysis of CM004, Kessler brilliantly shows the interweaving of the attributes of Amun and Upwawet and the mixing of levels of reality in the depictions of deities and humans.⁶² He proposes that the two donors of this stela were involved in a petition during a great procession of Upwawet at a funerary temple in the necropolis of Asyut, and were entrusted with carrying the standard of the god. Kessler’s arguments require a point-by-point examination. The intention is to raise the relevant issues in detail in my book of interpretation of the Salakhana stelae, which will accompany a full edition of the objects.

The present author believes, on the present evidence, that this object is likely to have been dedicated by the pair of soldiers for at least two, probably related, purposes. It was no doubt crafted to propitiate

⁵⁹Stela CM035 (JE 68584): *DuQuesne* DE 48 (2000) 26 pls 3 a-b.

⁶⁰*N de G Davies* The temple of Hibis III (New York 1953) 27 I left; *E Cruz-Uribe* The Hibis temple project I (San Antonio 1988) 106 n517.

⁶¹Most recently articulated in *D Kessler* Tierische Missverständnisse: Grundsätzliches zu Fragen des Tierkultes, in: *Tierkulte im pharaonischen Ägypten und im Kulturvergleich*, ed *M Fitzenreiter* (Berlin 2003) 33-67 (IBAES 4).

⁶²*Kessler* SAK 29 (2001) 162f, 168-172. On apparently cyclical nature of the iconography of this object, cf the recent interpretation of the vignette to Book of the Dead spell 110 by *M Heerma van Voss* Zur Vignette des Opfergefildes, Totenbuch 110, in: *Totenbuch-Forschungen*, ed *B Backes* et al (Wiesbaden 2006) 115-119.

Upwawet both as the local god of Asyut and as a significant deity of all Egypt, and also to acknowledge the importance of Amen-Re. We might then ask whether the donors dedicated the stela simply as a gesture of piety, or whether they had a specific object in mind. It is certainly possible that ritual activity was involved. Especially given the prominence accorded to Amen-Re, it may be inferred that the gods were invoked because of their associations with sexual or reproductive energy. Whether this was done in thanks for divine help already rendered, or whether in anticipation of it, we cannot tell.

DESCRIPTION OF STELA CM4 (Cairo JE 47381; W 189)

OBJECT: Round-topped limestone stela, described in JE as 'burnt'.

DIMENSIONS: 43 x 25 cm.

DATE: Probably late Dynasty XVIII (Horemheb).

PROVENANCE: Salakhana tomb, Asyut.

Above the top register, the lunette has been left blank, or possibly represents the Primeval Hill.

Top register:

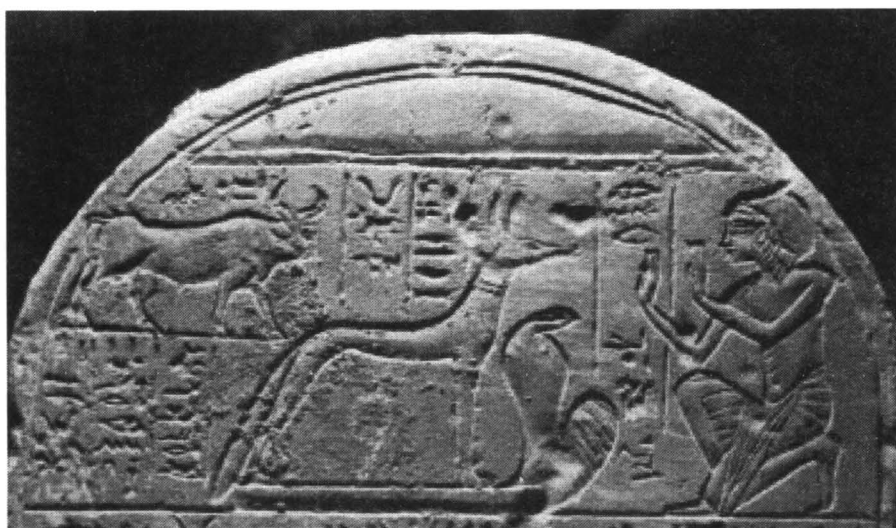


PLATE II: Stela Cairo CM004 (JE 47381): Top register

Photograph: Ahmed Amin

ICONOGRAPHY:

To right, facing left, a man wearing a feathered haircut and a short kilt, kneels before a figure of Upwawet on his standard. The standard resembles a sledge and has a raised ovoid in front of it instead of the usual separately rendered *šdšd*. From between the god's front paws rises an unusually large uraeus. Above and to left, a standing horned bull, given as Amen-Re-Kamutef, is seen facing right.

INSCRIPTIONS:

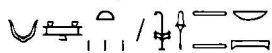
A. To right, one line of vertical text:



ir(i)-n R^c-ms

Made by Ra-mose.^a

B. Centre, two lines of vertical text, reading left to right:



Wp-w3wt- / sm'w' b3-t3wy nb-pt

Upwawet of Upper Egypt, controller of the Two Lands, lord of the sky.^b

C. Left, one line of horizontal text, followed by three lines of vertical text, reading right to left:



Imn-R' k3- / mwt.f bi3(?) -nfr m33- / bw-nfr ir(i)-n ḥs/y' 3 Wpi-ms

Amen-Re Kamutef,^c the fresh wonder(?),^d m33-bw-nfr.^e

Made by the greatly praised one^f Upwawet-mose.^g

Middle register:



PLATE III: Stela Cairo CM004 (JE 47381): Middle register

Photograph: Ahmed Amin

ICONOGRAPHY:

To left, facing right, a man wearing a feathered haircut and a short kilt, stands with arms raised before two figures of Upwawet (the god's Upper and Lower Egyptian forms), which are set on sledge-like standards adorned with large cobras and *sāšd*. Below these two figures, there is a four-legged table of offerings of fowl and cuts of meat(?), to right of which are shown a large snake and a series of smaller snakes and/or eels or fish.

An Extraordinary Votive Stela

D. Left, one line of horizontal text, reading right to left:



Wpi-ms

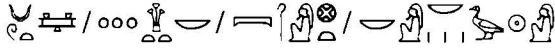
Wepi-(mose).^h

E. Centre, three line of vertical text, reading left to right, and a further line of vertical text to left:

sic

sic

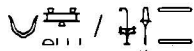
?



Wp-w3wt / -mḥw nb / -pt ḥq3-niwt / nb-nbw s3-R(?)

Upwawet of Lower Egypt,ⁱ lord of the sky,^j ruler of the city,^k lord of lords,^l son of Re(?).^m

F. Right, two lines of vertical text, reading right to left:



Wp-w3wt / sm'w'b3-t3wy

Upwawet of Upper Egypt, the great god, controller of the Two Lands.

Bottom register:



PLATE IV: Stela Cairo CM004 (JE 47381): Bottom register

Photograph: Ahmed Amin

ICONOGRAPHY:

To left, facing right, a man wearing a feathered haircut and a short kilt kneels with arms raised before an ithyphallic goose and two couchant goats (both species being forms of Amun). Below is seen a long, slender snake extending most of the width of the stela.

INSCRIPTIONS:

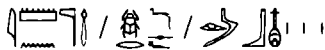
G. Left, three lines of vertical text, reading right to left:



ir-n Wpi- / ms / (det)

Made by Upwawet-mose.ⁿ

H. Centre, three lines of vertical text, reading left to right:

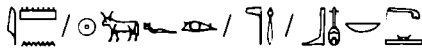


Imn ntr-^c3 / hpr-dsf / m33-b(w)-nfrw

Amun the great god,^o the self-created,^p *m33-bw-nfr*.^q

I. Centre, three lines of vertical text, reading right to left:

? sic



Imn- / R^c k3-(mwt).f / ntr-(^c3) / m33 / -b(w)-nfr / nb-b3h(?)

Amen- Re Ka-(mut)ef,^r the great god, *m33-bw-nfr*,^s lord of the phallus.^t

J. Right, one line of vertical text:



ir-n m33-b(w)-nfr Wpi-ms

Made by *m33-bw-nfr*^u Upwawet-mose.^v

NOTES:

^a*R^c-ms* is referred to only once on this stela, but the name occurs elsewhere in the Salakhana trove, on stelae Cairo JE 68569 (CM20), unpublished, and Cairo private collection no 3: *P Munro ZÄS* 88 (1963) 50 pl 3. It is very common in the New Kingdom: *Ranke* PN I 218 no 3. The stela was dedicated jointly by him and *Wpi-ms*, who is mentioned four times.

^bThe sequence of epithets *šm^cw* *b3-t3wy* is found on the majority of the Salakhana stelae: *DuQuesne* DE 53 (2002) 12 n(a). *nb-pt* is occasionally added to underline Upwawet's solar aspect, as on stela CM120: *DuQuesne* in: *Fs Cairo Museum I* (2002) 290; *DuQuesne* DE 53 (2002) 13 n(b): see also below, n(m). The designation of Upwawet as *šm^cw* reinforces his close association with Asyut.

^cThe horizontal text above the bull is continued in vertical lines beneath it. The bull as a hypostasis of Amen-Re in his aspect as Kamutef is well known.

^cFor the odd expression *mꜣꜣ bw-nfr*, found four times on this stela, see below, Annex.

^d*ḥsy-ꜣꜣ*: I am indebted to Dr JF Quack for this reading.

^eThe personal name *Wpi-ms* appears four times on this document and is spelled in three different ways:  in text C,  in text D, and  in texts G and H. The name *Wpi-ms* also occurs on another object from the Salakhana tomb: Cairo stela JE (CM259, W 521 bis) but does not appear to be recorded elsewhere. It is probably an abbreviated form of *Wp-wꜣwt-ms*: cf *Ranke* PN I 78 n2 ad no 14. *Wp-wꜣwt-ms* is found on Cairo JE 47380 (CM3), unpublished; Cairo no JE number (CM82; W 160), unpublished; and JE 68582 (CM33; *DuQuesne* DE 48 (2000) 25 pls 2a-b; see op cit n(d) for other citations, especially in the Ramesside era.

^fHere determined with , rather than  as elsewhere: see preceding note.

^gThe orthography of the name *Wp-wꜣwt* is unusual here, as is the spelling of *mḥw*. In the feminine form, it usually refers to the marshland of Lower Egypt: cf *Wb* II 123-125.

^jThe epithet *nb-pt* reflects Upwawet's association with Re: cf above, n(b).

^k*ḥqꜣ-niwt* as an epiclesis of Upwawet is otherwise unknown to me, but it must refer to the god's patronage of Asyut.

^l*nb-nbw*, assuming the interpretation is correct, is otherwise unattested as a designation of Upwawet.

^mAfter , a small sign has apparently been erased. There is space to fit the solar disk sign  *R*^c, which would make sense in the context. The conjunction *Wp-wꜣwt-R*^c is found fairly frequently from the Middle Kingdom onwards: *H Kees* ZÄS 57 (1922) 136; *DuQuesne* DE 53 (2002) 13 n(a).

ⁿSee also above, nn(a,g).

^oThis text is intended to refer to the goose as a hypostasis of Amun.

^pThe expression *ḥpr-ds.f* 'self-created' refers particularly to deities of generation: *Wb* III (1929) 261/6-7.

^qSee below, Annex.

^rThe sense is clear, although the sign  has been omitted.

^sSee below, Annex.

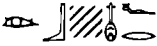
^tIn all probability this sign refers to the phallus, as the goose is shown with an erect male organ. Dr JF Quack suggests that  should be read *mꜣꜣ*: *Wb* II (1928) 175/5. Prof J J Janssen would prefer a reading of *bꜣḥ*: cf *G Lefebvre* *Tableau des parties du corps humain mentionnées par les égyptiens* (Le Caire 1952) §45. The bookroll which determines the word might indicate an abstract connotation: Prof ES Meltzer suggests *nb-imy*-*bꜣḥ* 'lord of past time', comparing Urk IV 111/9. On ambiguity in the use of the term *bꜣḥ* cf *R Shalomi-Hen* *Classifying the divine* (Wiesbaden 2000) 55, 74 ad CT IV 226b resp BD 17(28), regarding ancestors from the drops of blood from Re's phallus; discussion in *DuQuesne* DE 52 (2002) 105. *Kessler* SAK 29 (2001) 171 reads *wꜣṯ*.

^uSee below, Annex.

^vSee above, nn(a,g).

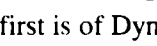
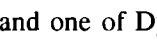
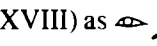
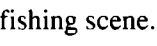
ANNEX

Possible meanings of the expression *m33 bw-nfr*

(1) The unusual expression which is probably to be transliterated as *m33-bw-nfr* occurs no fewer than four times in this document: in text C, it is written as , in text H as h , in text I as , and in text J as . In texts C, H, and I it is very hard to construe it as being other than an epithet, otherwise apparently unrecorded, of Amen-Re. In text J it is a designation of *Wpi-ms*, one of the two donors of this stela.

(2) The fact that the phrase is twice written with the eye-with-paint sign  might indicate that in these instances the verb is to be read as *ptr*. However, it seems most improbable that we are dealing with two separate expressions involving *bw-nfr*, and the extra strokes to the eye sign may simply be an expression of scribal idiosyncrasy, even though the eye sign appears in its usual form  in the other spellings and in other contexts on this object.

(3) In any case, the general sense of the term would not be significantly affected, since *m33* and *ptr* have a synonymous range of meanings. Both verbs could mean 'to learn' and can suggest participation as well as observation: Wb I (1926) 564/1-19) bzw Wb II (1928) 7-10.

(4) Wb Belegstellen II (1940) 254/30 provides four citations for *m33-bw-nfr*. The first is of Dyn XVIII, where it is spelled : PM V (1937) 179; *JJ Tylor & FLI Griffith Tomb of Paheri at el-Kab* (London 1894) pl 4; *JJ Tylor Walls drawings and monuments of El Kab I* (London 1895) pl 7 (top left); *K Sethe Urkunden der 18 Dynastie* (= Urk IV) (Leipzig 1905) 126, who translates as 'sich vergnügen und Gutes sehen'. The text accompanies a scene in which the tomb-owner and his wife receive gifts. *m33-bw-nfr* is also found in three Theban tombs, two of Dynasty XVIII and one of Dynasty XXVI. It is given as  in the tomb of *Qn-Imn* (Dyn XVIII): TT 93; PM I.1² (1960) 192(16); *N de G Davies Tomb of Ken-Amun* (New York 1930) I 20 pl 9. There it occurs in a caption to a scene showing young female dancers and musicians. The expression occurs in the tomb of *Hr-m-hb* (Dyn XVIII) as : TT 78; PM I.1² (1960) 155(13); *U Bouriant Tombeau de Harmhabi*, MMAF 5 (1893) 429 pl 6 [413-434], in the context of a fowling and fishing scene. In the tomb of *Ibi* (Dyn XXVI) the spelling is : TT 36; PM I.1² (1960) [63-68]; *V Scheil Tombeaux de Mâi* (etc), MMAF 5 (1894) 633 + pl 2 [541-656]. Here the tomb-owner is watching dances and other scenes of festivity. There are a few more references in Theban tombs, mostly of Dynasty XVIII, to *m33-bw-nfr* in the context of hunting and fowling scenes, including the following: *W Decker & M Herb Bildatlas zum Sport im alten Ägypten* (Leiden 1994) K.2.132 (pl 255); K 2.134 (pl 256), K 2.136, K 2.137 (pl 157).

(5) Wb Belegstellen II (1940) 254 notes that in the four above-mentioned cases *m33-bw-nfr* is always in association with the apparently synonymous $\text{𓄏𓄏𓄏𓄏} \text{ } shmh\text{-}ib$ 'to take delight', which is rendered almost identically in Hebrew as $\text{שמח לב} \text{ } smh\text{-}lb$. Wb II 254/30 translates *bw-nfr* as something which is 'angenehm zu Schauendes'. Prof M Heerma van Voss suggests in a personal communication that *bw-nfr* might refer to good actions (Wb II B 254/29) or to offerings (Ib 27), though the latter usage is recorded only for the Greco-Roman era,

(6) While *m33* in the tomb texts cited is evidently infinitival or participial, such a construction makes little sense in the context of stela CM4. There it surely means 'one who sees'. In Ramesside and later documents, the word *m33* signifies 'seer'. *wr-m3w* 'chief of seers' is attested in pLansing 10, 13b, 3 = *AH Gardiner* Late Egyptian miscellanies (Bruxelles 1937) 132/16; cf *RA Caminos* Late-Egyptian miscellanies (London 1954) 422 ad loc. it was originally a title of the Heliopolitan high priest, perhaps of a 'secular' nature, which dates back to the Old Kingdom: *MM Moursi* Die Hohenpriester des Sonnengottes (Berlin 1972) 147-154. The interpretation of as *wr-m3w* by *H Junker* Die Götterlehre von Memphis (Wien 1940) 27f as 'the one who sees the great (god)' is very improbable. The title *wr-m3w* also occurs in *AH Gardiner* The Wilbour papyrus (London 1941-1952) I (1941) pl 16 (lines A 34 line 49; A 35, 3; A 35, 5; A 35, 7); cf *Gardiner's* Commentary (1948) 12 (with supplementary note to on p 213), 84; *AH Gardiner* Ancient Egyptian onomastica (Oxford 1947) II 267*f.

(7) The verb *m33* is often used in the expression *m33-nfrw*, referring to a deity. Of Osiris, it is said in Book of the Dead spell 194 that 'I have come to see your *nfrw*': *T DuQuesne* At the Court of Osiris (London 1994) 57 §124 line A05. *m33-nfrw Wp-w3wt* is found on two Middle Kingdom stelae: *EAW Budge* British Museum hieroglyphic texts II (London 1912) 7 pl 17 (BM 559), 8 pl 23 (BM 581). *nfrw* is applied to Min in the context of the god's nakedness as observed in his cult-procession: *H Gauthier* les fêtes du dieu Min (Le Caire 1931) 110, 112, 114, 138f; *CJ Bleeker* Die Geburt eines Gottes (Leiden 1956) 48. An appropriate rendering would be 'to see (the god) in all his glory', with the ambiguity which such a translation implies.

(8) In Late Egyptian, *bw* can mean almost anything and nothing, and earlier refers to states of mind as well as places. *bw-nfr* signifies 'good cheer', 'happiness', 'good fortune' and related concepts: Wb I 450-453, to which add pLansing 15, 2 = *Gardiner* Late-Egyptian miscellanies 115/3.

(9) *Eissa* 1995, 34 states that the two donors of our stela were military types. The only possible indication of a job description for either person is the description of *Wpi-ms* as *m33-bw-nfr*, and it is presumably to this that he is referring. However, I can find no reference to the expression as a military title: it is not listed in *P-M Chevereau* Prosopographie des cadres militaires égyptiens du Nouvel Empire (Antony, France 1994).

(10) The sense of *m33-bw-nfr* on our stela must be somewhat different from the usage in the four tombs mentioned. In the latter, it applies to a sensation, and in the former to an individual and also a deity. The question then remains: What could such

a job designation mean? I suspect that, since the stela is replete with iconographic allusions to Amen-Re as a deity of male potency, this may also be the case with *m33-bw-nfr*. In that event it would need to be applicable both to the god and to his devotee. In the tomb of *Qn-Imn*, the associations of *m33-bw-nfr* are with physical pleasure, such as music, dancing, and the application of aromatic substances. This may also be true of the Salakhana stela. Both Amun-Re and the stela's donor *Wpi-ms* may therefore be 'seers of pleasure'.

(11) The expression *shmḥ-ib*, which seems invariably to accompany *m33-bw-nfr* in the tomb inscriptions discussed, is used as a title for the Ramesside love poems, obviously with sexual connotations: *B Mathieu* La poésie amoureuse de l'Égypte ancienne (Le Caire 1996) 134; *RA Gillam* The Mehy papers, CdE 75 (2000) 214 [207-216].

(12) The associations of the term *m33-bw-nfr* are clarified by the evidence of tomb walls, on the likely assumption that the captions refer to the paintings which they accompany. In the tomb of *P3-hri*, the expression is used for the tomb-owner's observation of his subordinates making him gifts: in this case, *m33-bw-nfr* is a passive activity. On the other hand, in the tomb of *Ibi* and others it is applied to actions performed by the owner, in this case the hunting of wildfowl. The other two cases are ambiguous and could both refer not merely to watching but to participation: in both the tomb of *Qn-Imn* and that of *Hr-m-ḥb*, *m33-bw-nfr* describes scenes of revelry such as dancing and singing. Though it might have been regarded as *infra dignitatem* for these noble individuals to be shown with informality, they may well have attended the party,

The author gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance of several distinguished scholars, and wishes particularly to thank Dr Wafaa el-Saddiq, Director of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo; Dr Mamdouh Eldamaty, former Director of the Egyptian Museum; Prof M Heerma van Voss; Prof Jack Janssen; Dr Janet M Johnstone; Prof Edmund S Meltzer; Prof Joachim Friedrich Quack; and Dr Geoffrey Tassie. He is most appreciative of the photographic expertise of Ahmed Amin, the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

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Printed by VIZUAL-GRAPH

ISSN 1221-4302
<https://biblioteca-digitala.ro> / <http://bibmet.ro>

